

punk planet

ISSUE #56 JULY AND AUGUST 2003

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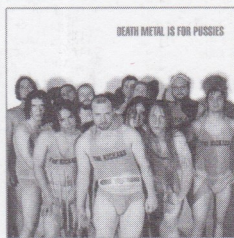
notes from underground

Jello Biafra interviews Greg Palast | Wire | Will Oldham | Dominatrix | Fat Mike talks politics

AN ARMY OF NONE

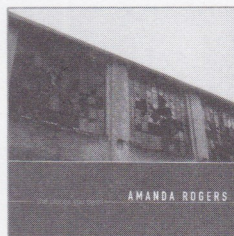
ALL ALONE AT THE ASS END OF THE
WAR ON TERROR A SOLDIER'S TALE.



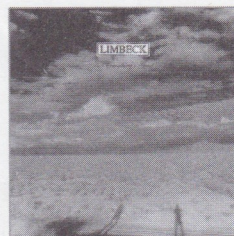


The Kickass
Death Metal Is For Pussies (CD)

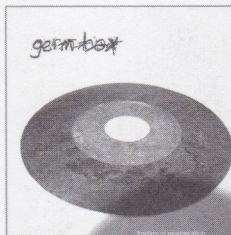
Ten new songs of epic, instrumental, prog, metal genius from these NC heshers. Fans of Bread Winner, Oxes, and the Fucking Champs take note Bifocal Media



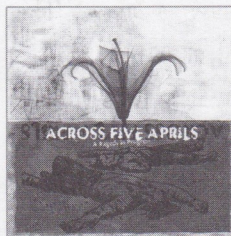
Amanda Rogers
The Places You Dwell (CD)
A girl, a piano, beautifully complex music with nothing to hide.
Immigrant Sun



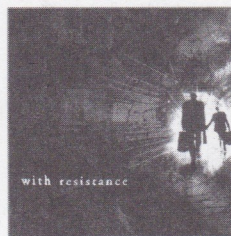
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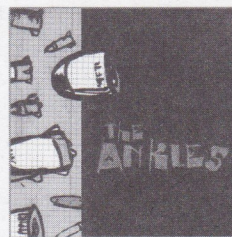
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Fraction of Exaggeration (CD)
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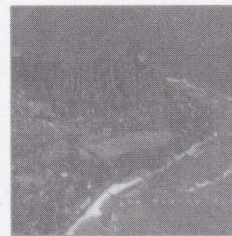
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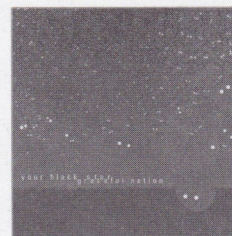
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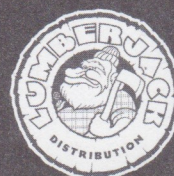


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PP

56

"There's got to be a motivation for standing up on stage and playing something. If you can't convince yourself, you're not going to convince anybody else."

—Wire

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A music school gets looted in Iraq; Photographer Mark Beemer and Kid Dynamite fight cancer; Paping zine; scenes from a protest; Delta Dart; Reading Frenzy; Get Your War On; and much, much more.

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intro56

It seemed like it should be our moment to shine: After covering the decimation of Iraq by sanctions, bombing, and hamfisted foreign policy for the last four and a half years (starting with PP30's cover story on Iraq—back when no one gave a damn about the country—and continuing all the way through PP53's massive Iraq diary), you'd think we'd have been *all over* this war. But the fact that we've devoted so much ink to the country made approaching covering the war intimidating.

In editorial meeting (to stretch the word to its absolute limits) after meeting, we kept running into the same wall: how to do Iraq differently than we've done it in the past? Sure, the fact that there was finally a war (as opposed to a decades-long starvation campaign and a never-ending bombing run) made this situation different. But the fact that you're reading this now and saying "Why's he writing about the war—that was months ago?" makes obvious the problem we faced. The war hit a week after our "Revenge of Print" issue went to press; too late for that issue, too early to really

seem timely in this one. So what to do? Dedicate space to analysis? Too much like we did with Afghanistan and the post-September 11th environment in PP47's "War Songs." Perhaps a diary of the bombing? Too much like PP53's Iraq diary. We were stuck. And then the most amazing thing happened: we got a letter.

"I am a soldier in the United States Army with orders under Operation Enduring Freedom and this is my story, including all the ugliness that normal people would keep to themselves," the letter began. "My story is a tale of boredom, frustration, and depression. The only conflict is in my head—I am utterly against the war in Iraq and any other war this administration may intend to wage, yet my daily routine is spent supporting the invasion of Iraq. I'm probably the last person you'd ever expect to be in the military, but I am. Lucky me."

It was a letter from a soldier currently serving in the US Army. He wasn't in Iraq—in fact, he was in the middle of Oklahoma, bored out of his skull and hating pretty

much every minute of it. His voice was so unique—funny, sad, insightful, and, at times, infuriating—that I asked him to keep writing letters in, with the possibility that they could be printed in the magazine.

The result is a truly original look at the way we wage war and the price we pay for it. The soldier's story very much is his own, but the times it is written in make it resonate within everyone that's read it. I hope it does the same for you.

To close up, I'd like to welcome aboard some additions to our editorial staff: Cate Levinson and Trevor Kelley. Trevor has written for us for some time and I'm happy to have him sign on as a regular contributing editor. Cate is new around here, but she's already picked up for my slack ass in her new position as managing editor. She's a powerhouse and we couldn't be more excited about having her aboard.

OK. You read now.

DAN

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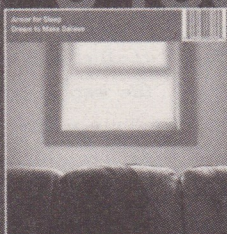


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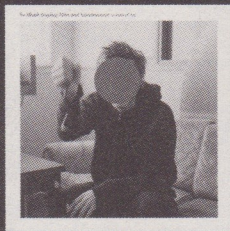
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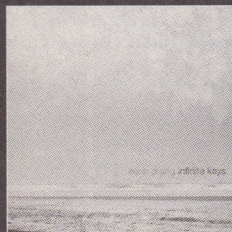
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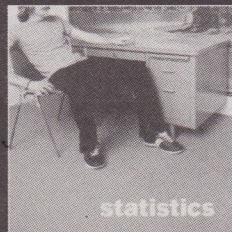
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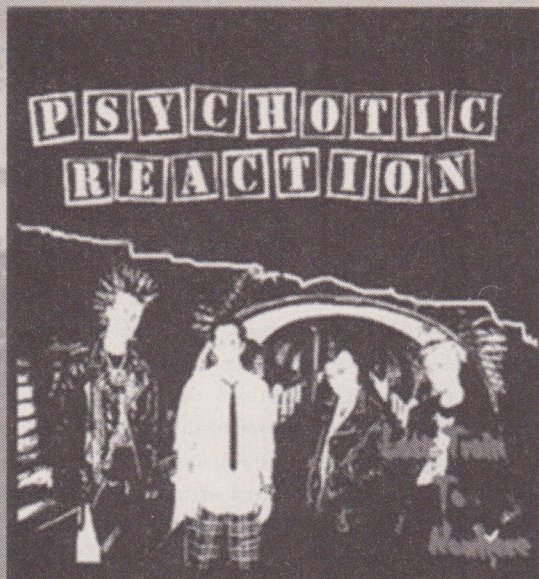
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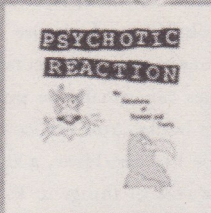
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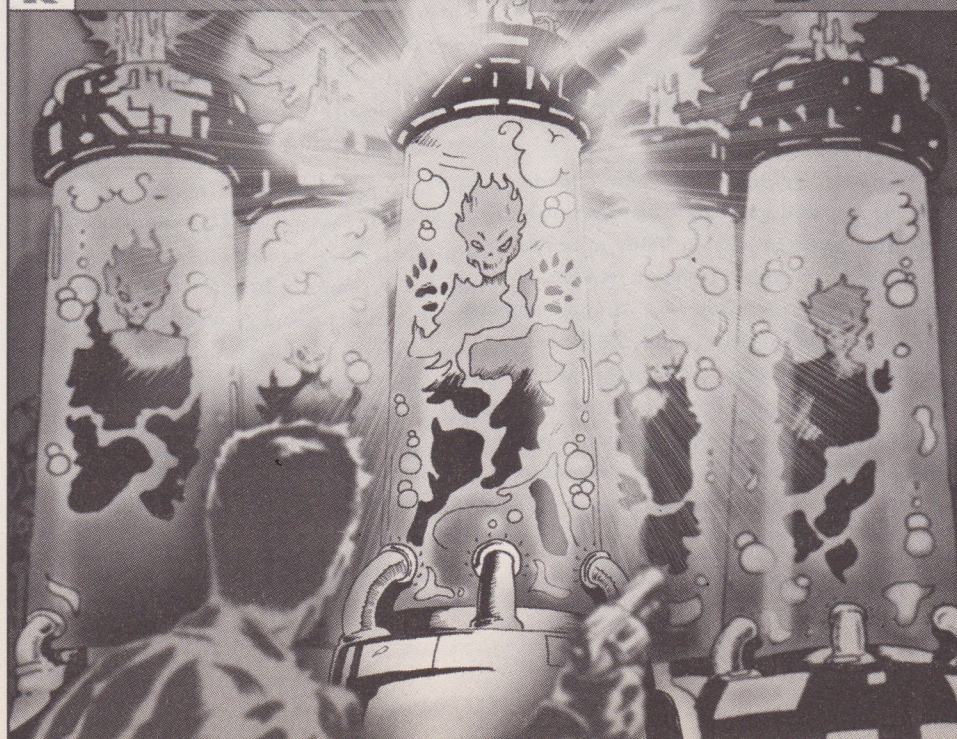
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Inspired by "Revenge"

► My Dear Punk Planet,

Thanks for the May/June issue ["Revenge of Print" PP55]—it was amazing. I've been feeling increasingly isolated by our increasingly antiseptic culture and our worsening cultural witch hunt. It's starting to make me feel so panicked and threatened, I've been making a mental list of those I know (or know of) who have moved to European countries, to work for magazines published in English (Amsterdam and Spain top the list right now).

In between thoughts of escaping to a smoky, hash-induced haze in Amsterdam or living in Barcelona where mid-afternoon naps are encouraged, my mind and eyes (and even though this is entirely too sentimental, even for me, my heart) have been sucked into the latest issue of *Punk Planet*. "The Revenge of Print" is thick as hell, filled with spirited culture jammers, writers, artists, and creative workhorses. And suddenly, I feel better—more connected, less antisocial, and simultaneously, am itching to get a new project started myself.

I had forgotten how much zines mean to me. I used to be surrounded by them, pillars of paper crowded my dusty and dirt-covered bedroom on the dreaded Island of Long. When I was unemployed for eight months, I had the time to sink myself into hundreds of them, writing to editors, producing my own, and making new letter friends. I'd meet some of them when they passed through NYC (Kelli of *That Girlzine*, where are you?) and any poetic scratch would inevitably find its way to an unlucky editor's PO box. Over the last few years, I've been on a steady diet of a limited number of zines. I'd forgotten that a litany of indie voices could take away my returning feelings of powerlessness.

So here are a few reason I love zines,

and why you should love them, too. Before anyone yells at me for idealizing or for sweeping generalizations, I realize there are crappy zines out there, too. And as with everything else on this godforsaken planet, there are assholes who make zines, too. I recognize that, and of course, this list does not mean to include every single zine ever produced:

1) They're cheap. Unlike CDs and books (the other two material obsessions I choose to hoard in lieu of the newly-popular duct tape and saran wrap), zines can usually be purchased for under five bucks. You can come home from someplace like See/Hear, a zine store in NYC, with a *stack* of things to keep you occupied without blowing your wad.

2) Zines often cover art, music, or politics *way* before mainstream culture gets a hold of them (if they ever do at all). This is not an aspirational tip, to make one "hipper" or "ahead of the curve" or whatever, but there's a lot going in the worlds of art, of music, politics, collecting, comics, etc. that never gets proper attention. If the cultural sludge is getting you down, turn to a zine that interests you, and if it's good, I guarantee that you'll find something or someone inside who's new to you, reinforces your passions, and makes you think. (Even if it's only the zine itself.)

3) Zines can feel like letters from friends. The writing and ideas are often personalized and reported without being mired in alienating academia. To boot, the visual images contained inside won't induce an instant case of inadequacy in the reader, forcing him/her into the gym or into a frenzy of shopping. Zines don't exist to force capitalism down your throat. If you balk at these accusations, take a moment to peruse *any* mainstream women's (or men's) "lifestyle" magazines.

4) For all the reasons listed above, buying

zines allows you to actively resist corporate culture and support local art instead. Rather than handing over a chunk of change for a paperback that costs \$24.95 that has been analyzed to shit for it's "marketability" and is inevitably beating really good, disenfranchised writers out of valuable bookstore shelf space, you're essentially giving money directly to the author.

5) By supporting zines, you're fighting the censorship produced by a pop culture whose existence relies on the advertising dollars of large corporations. Why is equal news time denied to critics of the war, while prowar pundits are allowed nightly tirades? Why are journalists being fired over attending antiwar rallies? Because the mainstream media is afraid of losing campaigns from conservative advertising clients in reponse to criticism of the president. Zines aren't required to bow to that kind of ignorant and cowardly bullying.

6) In direct opposition to institutions of the mainstream media's view of their respective audiences, zines don't assume you're dumb, easily led, or easily offended. They, instead, assume that you care, are a good listener, are open-minded, progressive, and well-informed. Isn't that nice? (Um, unless you individually prove them wrong. Just kidding.)

7) Zines just rock. The good ones are made of the blood, sweat, and tears of optimistic and passionate people, who often don't make a dime for their efforts. Zines often represent generosity, community, diversity, passion and the belief that there is a better way to exist, and that some things just need to be said, regardless of profits or recognition.

Support zine culture. Better yet, make your own.

Maria Raha

Our Bad.

► Hey Mike McKee and the *Punk Planet* folks,

Thanks for caring enough what I think to feature my answers to a few questions in the March/April 2003 issue of *Punk Planet* ["Where Have All the Musicians Gone?"]. I'm flattered. However, I was pretty surprised to see the name of my band/non-band Atom and His Package listed on the cover under the headline "Artists speak out against the war."

None of my answers "spoke out" against the war, or even really approached the subject of the war, and I feel uncomfortable with my position being stated for me without it being asked and as being "against the war" when my feelings about the war aren't as simple as saying that I'm "against" it.

Granted, the cover of your magazine certainly does not have room for a dissertation about the interviewees' positions on the war, but I just wanted to let you know that it didn't sit right with me and doesn't really represent my position about the war with Iraq.

Very briefly (I'm on tour right now, and don't have enough time right now to go into my thoughts in detail), I can see some positive things about taking out a horrible regime in Iraq, though surely I don't think the very scary Bush administration has my benevolent aims at the forefront of their agenda, and they've certainly gone about doing it in a completely alienating and horrible way.

I imagine that in the letters section of *Punk Planet*, I don't need to go into detail about how awful the Bush administration is as you all seem to cover many of those aspects very well. However, I would like to let you know that it definitely caught me off guard seeing that I was speaking out "against the war" when in fact, I wasn't and it just seems like a gross oversimplification of my views.

Thanks, and keep up the good work

Atom

Lending background on current events.

► Dudes,

Great job on the article about Iraq in the Jawbreaker issue [PP53]. I understand the incredible weight you must have given to the decision between the Iraq article and Jawbreaker taking the cover—no qualms here with your choice. Back to the point, the article was amazing. I learned a lot about the post-Gulf War/pre-Operation Iraqi Freedom era, and the effect resulting sanctions have had on the people. Your insight was profound and I found myself moved to tears on several occasions—I had to choke them back, since I was sitting outside at the time. Thank you for providing a unique point of view to the events which have been going on and giving a little balance to the information we are presented with day in day out by more available media.

Paul Palubinski

Thoughtless reviewing.

► Dear reviewer Brian Czarnik,

Jezus, could you stop reveling in your opportunity to hype all things pop punk and take a second to read the feminist/punk morals in the mag that you write for?! You wrote in the review section [PP53] that the highlight of the band Mexican Cheerleader is their "new hot-rockin' girl guitarist." Your opinion seems to be that her only contributions to the band are her newness and her hotness because the other members have their former bands Oblivion and Apocalypse Hoboken named to provide legitimacy. The band you reviewed, the woman you objectified, and the critical

underground community expects more thoughtful reviews.

Respectfully,

Kim Wetzel

Questioning the questioning

► Hey Punk Planet—

I feel the need to respond to Bob from Madison's letter in PP55 ["Questioning Turn it Down"]. Two of his comments irked me, as they exemplify a couple of things that have been bothering me recently in the punk scene.

First, he dismisses someone who spoke in his area as "that yuppie," apparently solely on the basis of his "button down shirt and leather shoes and briefcase." In my opinion, making sweeping judgments or classifications of someone based on something as superficial as appearance is the antithesis of the punk movement. Is there a dress code for being punk?

Secondly, he indicates that the movement about which he writes is a "'faith-based' organization" and goes on to say "I know I don't like the sound of it though—faith=religion" and makes references to Pat Robertson and John Ashcroft. It is a rather uninformed assumption that every faith-based or religious organization is in any way connected to or representative of the religious right. Though he represents himself as very concerned with freedom of speech, I wonder where he stands on freedom of religion.

Just thought I'd throw that out there. Thanks,

Heather in Maryland

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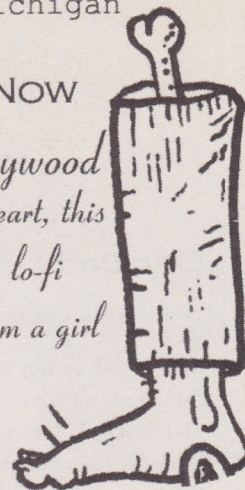
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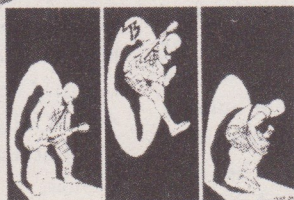
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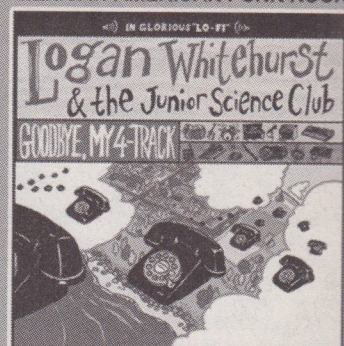
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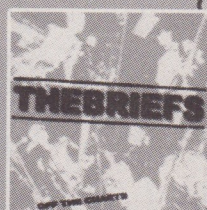
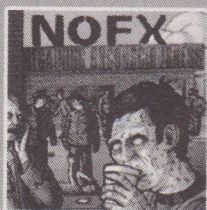
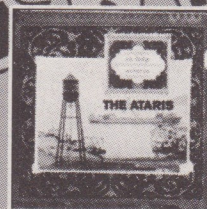
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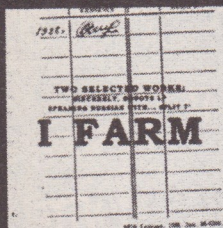
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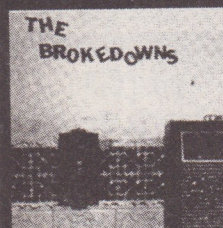
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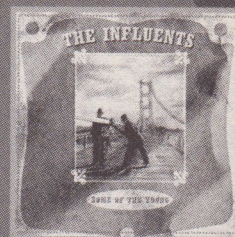
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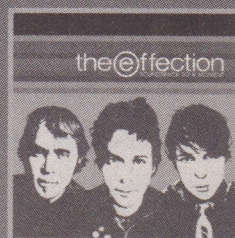


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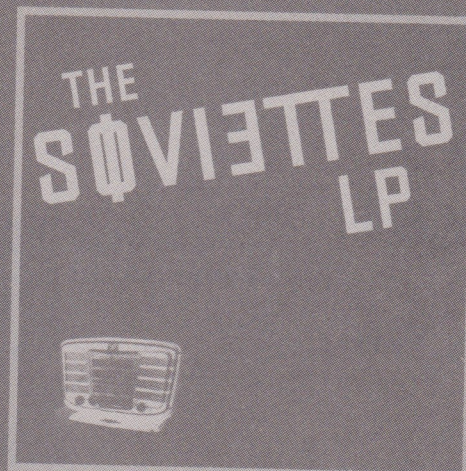
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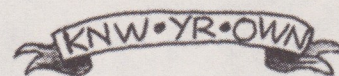
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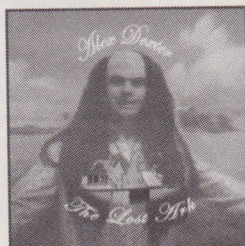
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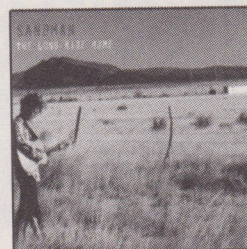
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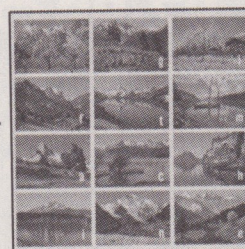
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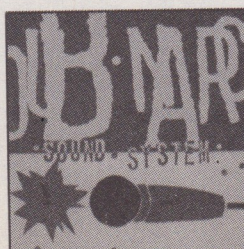


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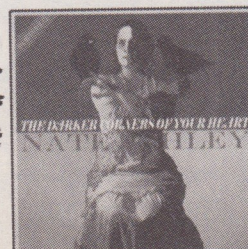


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The Sound of Silence

IN THE CHAOS OF POST-WAR BAGHDAD, TWO IRAQI MUSICIANS STRUGGLE TO PRESERVE THEIR MUSIC SCHOOL. BUT ALL THAT REMAINS AFTER LOOTING IS A SONG OF PEACE.

On a recent morning, as nurses dug graves in front of the Al Mansour Hospital, Baghdad University lay in ruins, and the Red Cross warned that the city's medical system was collapsing, two musicians from this wounded city came to my hotel room.

Majid Al-Ghazali and Hisham Sharaf hoped to call relatives outside Iraq on my satellite phone. Hisham's home was badly damaged during the war. "One month ago, I was the director of the Baghdad Symphony Orchestra," Hisham said with an ironic smile. "Now what am I?"

As Hisham tinkered with the phone's solar-powered battery, we joked that he could direct the telephone exchange. I told Majid we had some sheet music and a guitar for him. "What are notes?" he asked. "We don't even remember."

Majid had a particularly rough experience. During the first week of bombing, a neighbor called the secret police and turned him in for visiting with foreigners. He was jailed the next day. After the "fall" of Baghdad, the same neighbor claimed he was actually part of the secret police. Majid is terrified now.

"I think they want my house," he said. "No place is safe."

I first met Hisham at the Baghdad School of Folk Music and Ballet last year on one of my visits with Voices in the Wilderness, a campaign to end sanctions on Iraq and prevent further aggression against the Iraqi people. Hisham and Majid taught at the school during the day and rehearsed with the orchestra at night. As the war approached, I told Hisham how meaningful the song "O Finlandia" has

been to many people in the United States. At least 150 families who lost loved ones on September 11th had used this peace anthem as part of their memorial services. Sibelius composed the melody in the late 19th Century. Following World War I, lyrics were created emphasizing the common aspirations and dreams shared by all humanity. I offered to teach his class the song.

Hisham had chuckled then, and couldn't resist pointing out the irony that someone from the United States wanted to teach his students a peace song. "OK," he said, "Sing it for me. We can do this." Within two days, an entire class was singing an Arabic transliteration of the song.

Now, as they finished with the phone and said goodbye, I wondered if the hopeful, idealistic verses might embitter them today.

The next morning the two returned, shaken and distraught. They had approached US soldiers the previous evening, asking for help to protect their school. The soldiers said it was not

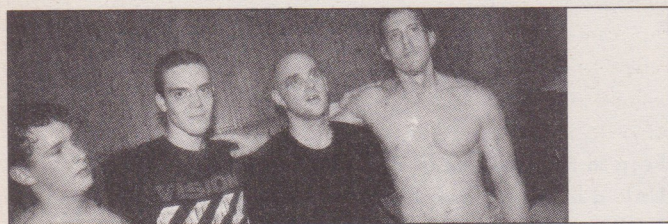
their job and ordered Hisham and Majid to go away. They went to the entrance of the school hoping they could somehow protect it alone. Five armed men arrived. Majid, Hisham, and Hisham's brother pled with them not to attack the school. The looters argued, "We are simple people. Poor people. Soon there will be no food, no money, and we have no jobs. You are rich people."

"Please," Majid said, "we will give you the instruments, give you the furniture, but don't destroy the music, the records, the history."

"No," the armed men said. "Baghdad is finished." They ransacked the school, broke many instruments, and burnt the music and the records.

Why do desperate people commit deplorable acts of mindless destruction? I don't know. But through decades of warfare and sanctions, powerful elites in Iraq, the United States, and the United Kingdom have ignored millions of Iraq's impoverished people, who have suffered tremendously.

"Here," Hisham said,



Make a Change

PHOTOGRAPHER MARK BEEMER ENLISTS A REUNITED KID DYNAMITE IN HIS FIGHT AGAINST CANCER.

On January 12, 2002, Mark Beemer lost his wife Syrentha Savio to cancer. She was a mere 31 years old. One of the things she would often tell her husband was that one day she wanted him to publish a book of his rock photos—and now, perhaps if only for her, that's exactly what he's done. Titled *Stealing Time*, Beemer's book of over 100 pictures manages to capture just about every band in the last decade's post-hardcore shape-shifting (from Worlds Collide to the Get Up Kids to Strike Anywhere). But there's one image in the book that really manages to stick out: one of a sweat-drenched, shirtless Kid Dynamite. Beemer took it at what he thought was the band's last show. With a laugh, he says, "It doesn't have as much meaning now, does it?"

No, it doesn't. Beemer can only blame himself for that one. After all, this past April he managed to convince the band to reunite for three charity shows to benefit Beemer's Syrentha J Savio Endowment, a foundation for early cancer detection that he started in his late wife's honor.

So tell me a little about the shows.

Man, they were just phenomenal. The energy that flowed through the whole event was just so positive. Kid Dynamite would have *never*

"listen to this. This is all we have left." He handed me headphones borrowed from a Norwegian television correspondent. The orchestra was playing "O Finlandia." Listening to the children craft their music, I softly sang the words:

"This is my song, O god of all the nations. A song of peace for lands afar and mine. This is my home, the country where my heart is. Here are my dreams, my hopes, my holy shrine. But other hearts in other lands are beating, with hopes and dreams as deep and true as mine."

I stopped. Hisham had begun to cry. —Kathy Kelly

This piece first appeared on www.iraqpeaceteam.org

"Whether it's the familiarity or the humor, it definitely gets people's attention."

OLYMPIA'S DELTA DART MIX THE POP HITS WITH THEIR UNDERGROUND JABS.

Able to rock the street knowledge and the book learnin', the women of Delta Dart—Erin McCarley, Amber Bell, and Sissy Chrome—creatively twist '80s pop anthems and other pop-culture references into acoustic feminist manifestos and bittersweet stories of love. I recently interviewed the Olympia, Washington trio about their music and their thoughts on this insane world.

Your songs include a lot of re-contextualized pop songs. Why do this type of pop-culture recycling?

Eighties pop is part of our collective memories because we all had our first conscious exposure to pop culture then. So naturally our response as feminists would be to attack and rearrange the very culture that created our self-awareness. Doing this also gets peoples attention, especially since most of our audience also grew up in the 1980s. It's not always clear to us if people understand *why* we are doing it, or if they even recognize everything that we use, but we think that

on some level—maybe even subconsciously—we are hitting a nerve. Whether its the familiarity or the humor, it definitely gets people's attention. But beyond getting attention, we wanted to use well-known pop verses to re-construct a meaning that was relevant to us as young women. For instance, we took the Beatles verse, "she loves you / yeah yeah yeah / and you know you should be glad" and changed it to "he loves you / yeah yeah yeah / with a love like that you know you won't be back." In doing this, we took a famous, instantly recognizable song, and re-oriented its meaning to be relevant to abusive relationships. ¶ It's sort of ironic that so much of our band's conception was based on these things, but on our new record

done this unless it was for a real cause. But they didn't even have to think about it for this.

Really? These being reunion shows, I thought they would have needed at least a little convincing.

Not at all. When I asked Dan Yemin and the other guys about it, and what it was for, they all instantly said yes. There was not even a thought.

At times it seemed that the reunion could possibly overshadow the cause here. Did that ever concern you?

No, I didn't really think about it. As it got closer to the shows, sure, Kid Dynamite were getting the press and Kid Dynamite were getting the interviews. But, just to show what kind of guys they are, everything they said would involve the Endowment. It was all for the cause. That's what I wanted to concentrate on. That's why, before Kid Dynamite played every night, I would get up there and talk about the Endowment.

Why don't you do that some more: Tell me what you're trying to accomplish with all of this.

The Endowment is a partnership that we have with the Lombardi Center at Georgetown University, which is where Syrentha was treated. When my wife passed away, I decided that I really wanted to do something in her name. But I didn't want to buy a park bench or a tree—I wanted it to be something that would actually affect someone else's life. My wife was very lucky—her insurance, at the

time, was amazing. We would get invoices for \$10,000 a week sometimes and we would never have to pay them. Obviously, there are thousands of people out there without that option. When I created this endowment, I really wanted the money I was raising to affect someone, so I earmarked it for underprivileged people in different cities to get cancer treatment. Georgetown has a van that goes into different cities and screens women and when these women come back positive from these tests, our money will treat them. ¶ Initially, when I sat down with the people at the Lombardi Center, they kind of looked at me and said, "What can you do? You have to raise \$50,000 to make an endowment really work." But I knew I could do it. A year to the day later, we had raised \$45,000 dollars. After the shows this weekend, it's going to be up to \$65,000.

That's amazing.

Yeah, it really is. We sold 748 shirts last weekend. We made these Kid Dynamite shirts that were basically promotion for the Endowment and 748 kids bought them. I know that 99 percent of the kids were there to see the band and they couldn't care less why they were playing. But during the show, while they were there, we tried to give them as much of an education as possible. —Trevor Kelley

You can order a copy of Stealing Time at www.beermkid.com. For more information on the Syrentha J. Savio Endowment visit www.syrentha.org.

doesn't use any recycled pop songs.

What brought about that change?

On all of our past records, we had written and recorded these songs that we couldn't perform live. We all agreed that for this record we wanted to consciously write songs that could be easily reduced to a basic acoustic guitar melody we can play live.

Is playing as an acoustic punk band easier than playing electric, or vice versa?

Acoustic music is as punk as it gets! You can play *anywhere* at *anytime* and not have to carry a goddamn thing! And it's cheaper—no \$300 amps! It creates such an accessible atmosphere. We can have kids at our shows and not have to worry about hearing damage.

Not to mention it's way more intimate, and can also contribute to diminishing the barrier between performer/audience when you aren't using microphones or PAs.

Do you feel that feminism and pop culture can ever really work together?

Pop culture has an amazing power over people and if it were to *genuinely* welcome and *fairly* portray different feminisms, they could work together in a positive way. Although I doubt that something corporate could ever be feminist, since in the US the main goal of corporations is to make a profit and fuck the people, which is totally not what any sort of social progress is about or based on.

With your use of pop songs, acoustic guitars, and personal lyrics do you think some people miss the politics?

Yeah, totally. Our songs deal a lot with the more personal side of things and it seems like a lot of the time people don't consider that to be a valid political statement because it's not aggressive enough. But who says being political has to be aggressive? How can it *not* be political for anyone, male or female, to honestly express their feelings about sex, life, love, and personal experiences? There is *none* of that in the mass media—it's all preconceived and pre-programmed. And the expression that we do see is all total bullshit like Britney Spears singing about love—

um. Sorry, but *no*. Anyone who doesn't believe that love can be political should read *All About Love* by bell hooks.

Have you felt the need to become even more overtly political in the face of the current environment?

Our new album definitely is much more political than any of our past material, and we definitely all feel that it is impossible to ignore the bullshit that is going on. Its come to the point where we don't think *anyone* can ignore it, even if they try. It's seriously the end of the fucking world! Bush is going to kill us all if he can! —Miranda Hale

Delta Dart is online at:
<http://deltadart.isfuckingcool.com>

"With 500 kids a week, I hear all their problems."

JOHN MEJIAS' INNOVATIVE COMIC ZINE PAPIING LOOKS INTO LIFE AS A PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER.



Only one zine can give you the story of a struggling boy struggling with the idea of identity on one page and an illustrated recipe for making fried yucca on another: *Paping*. In each issue of his comic zine, John Mejias regales his readers with autobiographical stories of his work as an art teacher in a New York public school. The pages of *Paping* also feature work from other comic artists as well.

In *Paping* Mejias' own characters are abstract—patterns and shapes collide into one another, creating images that, in any other comic, are used to signify conflict or a surreal perception. In *Paping*, they're just the elements of daily life.

Is there a zine or comic that made you want to do what you're doing now?

When I was in junior high, I read a lot of Marvel comics, like *Daredevil* and *GI Joe*. That's how I got into comics, but I don't think that's an influence now. My dad tells me, "Hey, maybe you should make it about superheroes or print it more regularly." I can't really blame him, he doesn't really get it—but that's his way of being supportive, which is fine.

"This is what democracy looks like!"

FROM STORMING THE STREETS TO SITTING IN A CALL: SCENES FROM CHICAGO'S LARGEST ANTI-WAR PROTEST SINCE THE BLOODY 1968 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION.

On the first night of the US bombing of Iraq, 15,000 people filled downtown Chicago. At the end of the march, Chicago police surrounded the last of the protesters and arrested 800 of them. This is a diary of the night's events.

Bombs rain down on Baghdad. Chicago takes to the streets, the only place we have left. There are punks, anarchists, but this time they are not alone. There are silver-haired urban hippies, kids with horn-rimmed glasses, law stu-

dents in Gap sweatshirts, gutter-punks, war veterans, and college professors. There are giddy little children toting hand-painted signs and somber urban warriors donning black handkerchiefs round their faces. There are women in wheelchairs and men in pinstripes. Our president has dismissed us and we are pissed off. Diners peak out from restaurant windows. We smile in the waning daylight and give them the Vietnam V.

We take over Lake Shore Drive, a major commuter highway, at rush hour. How did we get ourselves into this mess? Oil men in office, and suddenly our freedom is as slippery as the commodity they crave. Demonstrators flood the northbound lanes, then the south bound ones. We are *everywhere*. People along the sidewalk file in, some see it on TV and run out to join the celebration. We're just crossing the street, just going home and taking all our friends with us. "WHOSE STREETS?" we call. "OUR STREETS!" we respond. No one can silence us now. Drivers get out of their cars and jump right in. A few black girls in gold turn

up 50 Cent on the radio and grind in the streets. It is fucking fabulous. Some people give us the finger. Others flash the peace sign or honk their horn in solidarity—CTA bus drivers, FedEx men and SUV moms alike. A carload of Koreans smile and wave. A woman in a smart grey suit steps out of her luxury vehicle, gives me a high five, and joins the march, chanting "EXXON MOBIL BP SHELL! TAKE YOUR WAR AND GO TO HELL!" right along with the rest of us. Some may call it hypocrisy. I call it an awakening.

Because this is Chicago, we like to end our protests with death and brutality. It's

So you're dad knows you're doing the zine?

Oh yeah, he reads every one of them.

"Paping" was originally your dad's nickname . . .

Yeah, it's his nickname. In Puerto Rico, people call little kids "Papi" but his great-grandmother and his grandmother always called him "Paping."

Patterns seem like a really important element in your art: The cover of *Paping* is usually silkscreened on wallpaper; the characters faces are usually abstracted, and a lot of their clothing have very dramatic, clashing patterns. Is there a symbolism behind that?

In high school, I did a lot of collages with wallpaper. I went to a hardware store down by Canal Street and asked them if they had any old wallpaper sample books and they gave me 10 of them! I have a lot of old wallpaper in my house and I'm really fascinated by it.

It's very hard to distinguish characters in *Paping*, because of the abstractions. This is very different from traditional comics like *Peanuts*, where Charlie Brown looks the same in almost every frame. Was that a conscious decision?

Well, I try to do small things to remind you who each character is. Like in #7, I use the same print for this one girl every time, her hair looks a certain way every time. When I draw myself, I always have a pencil behind my ear—it's a little cue. And this one kid always has this one shirt on . . .

dramatic, it's fun, but mostly, it's expected. We have a reputation to keep. And so do the Chicago Police. We may not remember Haymarket, but we know. We all know. Parsons. Spies. Fischer. Engel. Lingg. The names don't matter, it's the damn script that never changes. Suddenly there are hundreds—maybe thousands—of cops in riot gear. You can almost hear the crowd sigh. We knew it would end like this. This is a factory and today is just another day on the job. We are bottles on an assembly line and the police will not go home until they have capped each and every one of us.

To serve and protect Chanel, Gucci, and Saks Fifth Ave, the police stand between us and the Magnificent Mile, Chicago's ritzy shopping street. We chant "LET US MARCH!" And then, because we are a bunch of smart asses, "WE JUST WANT TO SHOP!" The CPD is not amused. They are in rare form. They chase us around town and corral a thousand or more into a double police barricade. We are trapped now. There is nowhere to go and we all know they have won. We are smart, but naïve, and tonight we have been duped. We know we are fucked—so we dance. A group of gutter-punks bang a bunch of buckets attached to a shop-

I thought that shirt looked like a crossword puzzle.

That's actually a piece of origami paper.

Is that character based on one of your students?

They're all based on my students, almost exactly.

You do print runs of about 500. Do you screenprint in the school where you work?

Actually, I screen print in my kitchen. I went to Purchase College and was a printmaking major. When I graduated from school, I worked for two years in a place called Brand X Editions and did prints for artists. I wasn't the main guy, I was the lowest-rung-on-the-ladder guy, but I still got a lot out of it. I worked there long enough to learn how to screen print in my kitchen.

Would you be doing this zine if you weren't teaching?

I think teaching really made me do the zine on a regular basis. People usually have a good reaction to the teaching stories, and I have a lot to say about it—about teaching, about kids, and and what's going on in the public school system. With 500 kids a week, I hear all their problems.

Are you using the school's copier?

Yeah. The principal knows, I asked him.

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ping cart—a rag tag drum set—and we all hop to the beat. We've got nothing but time now. Gold Coast tenants seemingly safe in their high-rise homes watch the spectacle below. The standoff continues until a creepy police chief in a wet black trench coat appears on the scene. He looks like hell. He points out certain people in the crowd and his men drag the demonstrators away. They surge into the crowd, grab signs, smash cameras, and take us away in zip cuffs. "SHAME! SHAME! SHAME!" They hear nothing. They are just at work.

I end the night in Grand Central Station Cell Block One. It is neither grand nor

central, but I am not a criminal, so I guess the name is beside the point. They take all my weapons—that is, my shoelaces, jewelry, cigarette lighter, and pens. They take my glasses and shove me into a dank, dark cell, where "they usually keep the whores." Horse? I ask. The place smells like a stable. We are as wholesome and harmless as a box of Girl Scout cookies, but our captors hate us anyway. The door swings open, shut, open, shut until a daylight none of us can see comes. The spirited detainees of Cell Block One swap stories and sing—sitcom tunes (TV really does connect us all), Joan Jett, Pat Benatar. We make drunken boasts

PLAYTIME — 2002 36" x 48"



OWLS SINGING — 2001 14" x 22"



GALLERY: The Secret Life of Animals

PAINTINGS BY CHRIS KERR

sober and threaten revenge. The door swings open. "Please let us go!" Then shut. "Fuck you!" We lounge, stretch out on the dirty concrete. It's like a slumber party or a TB ward—I can't decide. A blonde cop bursts through the door and hisses, "because of you, I had to work on my fucking day off!" We are all victims here.

The CPD releases us two by two until 12 remain. We want to see the light of day again. We will not spend another night in this hell-hole, so we scrounge together bond funds. A hundred bucks each—freedom *does* have a price. The blonde lady cop collects our dues. Another

protest like this and we will be convicted felons, she tells us. Felons! I like the sound of that. I had no idea it was so easy. She is sweaty, face flush with stress. We don't hate her—she has a boss too. "You

will be thrown in county," she says, "and all the bitches there will be callin' you honey." We are not scared, not really, but still we run, run away, chasing our slippery freedom.

"There has to be a way to show kids that jazz can be punk."

SAN DIEGO'S THE PLOT TO BLOW UP THE EIFFEL TOWER BRING THEIR JAZZ-PUNK FUSION TO THE MIDDLE OF THE DANCE FLOOR.

San Diego's the Plot to Blow Up the Eiffel Tower is a four-piece that marries punk and jazz in a cacophonous ceremony of saxophones, fero-

cious screaming, chopped-up bass lines, polyrhythmic drumming, and crazed guitars. What could come together as an abrasive, off-

putting mess actually blends into an intriguing blend of discordant genres.

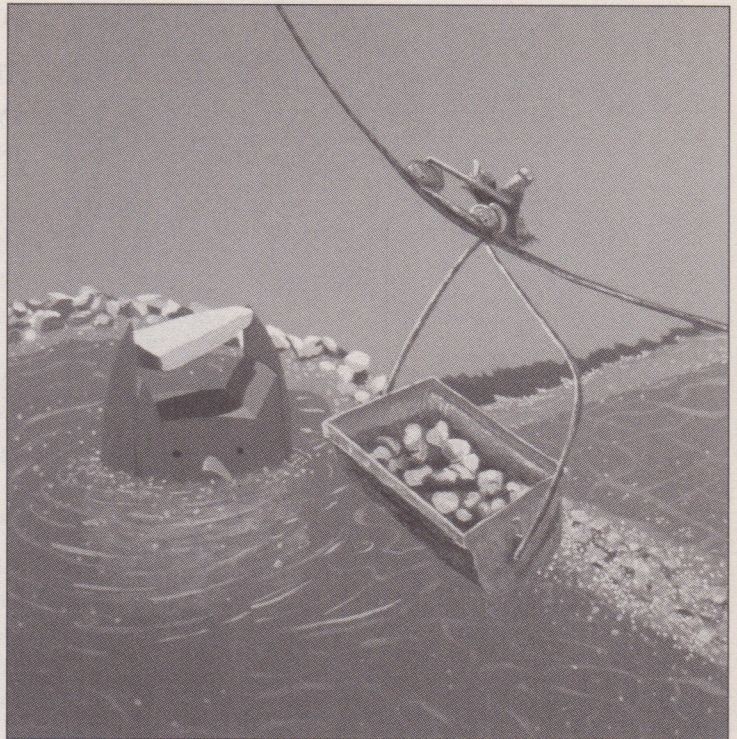
The Plot's new full-length debut, *Dissertation, Honey* (Happy Couples Never Last), takes the act's boundary-bashing even further. The disc opens with a jazzy spoken word intro before cranking into a Fugazi/Refused-ish high intensity rant laced with tightly wound guitar work, staccato beats, wailing sax, and ominous bass rumblings. The rest of the album shifts between rest and chaos, with Wurlitzers and trumpets adding to the calm interludes before the band embarks on its next speedy, avant-hardcore expedition.

The Plot hatched a year ago by Brandon Welchez

TOO YOUNG FOR TRAGEDY — 2001 48" x 60"



OWL DAM — 2002 24" x 24"



Chris Kerr is the master of the deadpan: "Owls, elves and others dot the compositions as they forge their way through alpine landscapes," is how he describes his work. And while accurate, it gets nowhere close to the explaining the charm of Kerr's paintings. Check them out yourself at www.slimlimb.com.

(vocals, sax) and Chuck Rowell (guitar, vocals, melodica). When the two were feeling stifled by the constraints of their previous band, Sasha, they decided to take more chances with their music. "I was just watching a jazz documentary and it inclined me to learn more," says Rowell. "And I saw these guys—Anthony Braxton, Ornette Coleman, Charles Mingus—who were causing trouble and really stirring up music in the same way that the Circle Jerks and Black Flag did. With Brandon knowing how to play saxophone and me having inspiration, we both just sort of decided, why not combine punk and jazz?"

"There's a lot of jazz that can appeal to punk kids but

they just don't know about it," he continues. "And they have preconceived notions about what jazz is and what it sounds like—so we thought, there has to be a way to show kids that jazz can be punk."

The Plot, which also includes drummer Brian Hill and Dan Maier on bass/vocals, continue to break from convention in their live shows. The Plot often sets up in the middle of the audience as opposed to on a stage. "We love playing on the floor and being immersed in the crowd," explains Maier. "We like to jump around and have fun and be energetic. We definitely don't just stand there and play."

This energy is the key reason they refuse to play

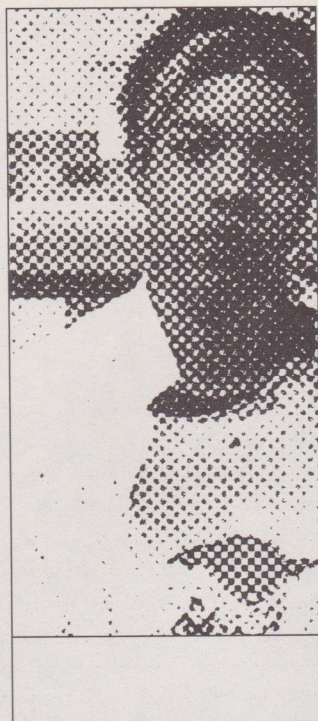
places that aren't all ages. According to, Welchez, "Punk is kids' music. I'd rather play to high school kids than some 25-year-old hipster who is at the show to be seen and doesn't give a fuck. I'd rather play to people who want to have fun. We try to share something with them other than, 'We're going to play for you, and you clap for it.'"

Overall, the Plot is committed to making music inclusive, whether that involves concocting new cross-breed genres, creating innovative setups for their live shows, or working with people outside the band. They enlisted Welchez's brother to play trumpet on *Dissertation*. And they often invite members of

other bands, and spoken-word scribes, like Kailani Amerson, to join them on stage.

"Collaborating with other people doesn't happen very often in punk—especially if you're doing it for the pure fun of the music," says Rowell.

Although they pretty much stick to punk and jazz right now, Welchez says there's nothing holding the Plot back from journeying into other musical realms as well. All of us are avid record collectors, and we listen to all kinds of stuff. I wouldn't be surprised if, in the future, Arabic or klezmer influence start to surface. It's just a matter of saturating yourself in something so much that it just comes out." —Jennifer Maerz



"I am not going to be naked to sell records."

PSALM ONE STRUGGLES TO MAKE HER NAME IN THE MAN'S MAN'S MAN'S WORLD OF HIP-HOP.

Making your way independently in hip-hop is difficult—just ask the folks struggling at it in your town. But it's doubly hard if you're a woman. Add to that balancing your burgeoning rap career with getting a degree in chemistry and you can start to imagine the pressure Chicago's Psalm One has put herself under for the last couple years. Thankfully, with the release of her album *Bio: Chemistry*, all that hard work seems to be paying off.

How did you get started MCing?

I wrote a lot of poetry and other things. One year, maybe when I was a sophomore in high school, I started writing rhymes. I waited a year before anyone heard anything that I was working on and then I just started ciphery and got up with a crew. That was when I was still in high school, we did

"Punk Rock didn't save my life—it was the printed word."

PORTLAND'S READY FRENZY BOOKSHOP HAS HELPED TO BUILD ONE OF THE MOST VIBRANT ZINE SCENES CURRENTLY AROUND.

Reading Frenzy, in Portland, Oregon, calls itself an "independent press emporium." It sits on a triangular city block it shares with other independent businesses: two record shops and a few restaurants. Painted in a lovely amalgam of black, bright yellows, pinks, and oranges, Reading Frenzy holds about 15 large shelves that hold books, magazines, and zines, and comics. A desk sits in a corner a desk where the mostly-volunteer staff meticulously logs each item sold. It's a small space—only about 650 square feet—

that at first glance seems merely charming and unassuming. However, over the past seven years it's grown into a vital center for the perpetuation of independent publishing in Portland.

Chloe Eudaly is the store's proprietress; she opened Reading Frenzy on September 1, 1994. "Punk rock didn't save my life—it was the printed word," she notes. "Although, to be fair, the first inkling of Reading Frenzy emerged on the sidewalk outside of the world-famous, all-ages music club,

the X-Ray Café (circa 1992), while my boyfriend and I were selling used seven-inches on the sidewalk trying to raise funds to get into a Nation of Ulysses show."

The shop does offer its fair share of punk rock magazines (this one included), but its most important merchandise is the most misunderstood—and marginalized—of the literary genres: the fanzine. "We take any locally published periodicals on a consignment basis, regardless of quality or content. I've had this no-strings policy since day one. I want to give small publishers a venue for their work and of creating a kind of local info-trading post," Eudaly explains. "While it does take up a chunk of space and time, I think it's a very worthwhile endeavor, and encourages other booksellers

to consider it. This small gesture of support and encouragement has created a lot of attention and goodwill in the larger community and every once in a while something completely amazing will turn up on our shelves."

In 1998, Eudaly expanded her vision—and made another vital contribution to Portland's thriving independent press culture—when she opened the Independent Publishing Resource Center. Located upstairs from Reading Frenzy, the IPRC has gradually become a full-blown, non-profit workspace—and a bona fide bastion of independent publishing in Portland. For a nominal fee, members can use the space to create media of all sorts; tools provided include computers, a copier, letterpress, a fax, and bookbinding materials. The IPRC also

little songs here and there, stupid stuff. When I got to college people started to take notice, like "Wow you can actually rap?" But I wasn't really thinking about it, I was thinking about graduating and becoming a chemist. But by my junior year, my friend Manny was like, "You should come over to my house and record." By my senior year, we got the money together and released *Bio:Chemistry*.

Has self-releasing your own album been more work than you expected?

I learned a lot of things from *Bio:Chemistry*, mainly that you've got to market and promote your damn product! Don't just have FedEx send you a thousand CDs and no one knows about it except 30 of your friends. It won't sell. People are starting to know who I am and so it's finally starting to sell. It's a mindfuck for me because this is a good album but people are hesitant to pick it up because they don't know me. I'm working on building up a name right now.

Do you think building up your name is harder because you don't have the image of, say, Lil' Kim—someone who's image is totally focused on her sexuality?

You ever heard of Kelly Price? She sang for Puffy for years

and Puffy told her "I am not going to give you a deal,—you're too big." She went elsewhere and got a deal and after she went platinum she decided to go on this binge diet. I don't know, she doesn't look that good to me now. As far as the whole image thing, there are a lot of people in the underground who say "I don't have an image—fuck images!" But once you put your voice out there, it is going to mold into something you can't control and people are gonna say whatever they want to say about how you are or who you are. ¶ When it comes to sex, it is a big part of my life—for what 14- to 24-year-old person *isn't* it a big part of their life? But when it comes to sex I just *talk* about it—I don't *try* to be sexy. There are times when I've wanted to look a little more tomboyish or a little more sexy or whatever but that's my choice—it is never someone whispering in my ear. But women out there like Trina and Kim and Foxy, I don't hate on any of them. Hip-hop to me is a lot more than my image; it is a way for me to express things. In this whole world there are a lot of things that I am good at, but it is the thing that I am best at. But I am not going to be naked to sell records. — Marissa

Bio: Chemistry is available from Banarnar Records: www.banarnar.com

holds instructional workshops in graphic design, bookbinding, letterpress, publishing basics, and other topics relevant to the independent publisher. In Portland, its existence has made accessible the idea that self-publishing is a tangible option.

With resources like Reading Frenzy and the IPRC, Portland's independent media has been expanding and fortifying its community networks. A few years ago local zine-sters organized the annual Portland Zine Symposium. Coming up on its third year, the Symposium includes workshops, readings, music—even a kickball tournament. In 2002, between 600 and 1,000 people attended the Symposium.

Says Eudaly, "When I opened Reading Frenzy, there was very little visible self-pub-

lishing activity going on. In part, that was due to the lack of venues for such material, but I do think that Reading Frenzy and the IPRC have helped create a friendlier climate. Ninth and Oak has become a bustling hub of publishing activity. You can conceive, create, produce and sell your zine without ever leaving the block! We now have hundreds of local consignors."

Reading Frenzy goes beyond merely being a locally-owned bookshop. It's an open community space devoted to the free exchange of ideas and information. This attitude is so genuine that the store doesn't feel like a business. "I do think we operate in a gray area," says Eudaly. "We have volunteers and paid staff. We are not an info shop, but we do provide space for fliers, notices, free publications and

act as a kind of underground information and referral service. I had issues around money and profit early on, but I am over it, because 1) It's not very profitable, and 2) I deserve to get paid for my work. In fact, lately I've been dreaming about fellowships for 'third place'-type business owners and people who are

'out-of-pocket philanthropists.' These are people whose projects don't fit the bill for most grant-giving foundations, but are not in it for the money." —Julianne Shepherd

Reading Frenzy is located at 921 SW Oak St in Portland, Oregon. Check 'em online at Readingfrenzy.com

"This is the Earth. This is where we live."

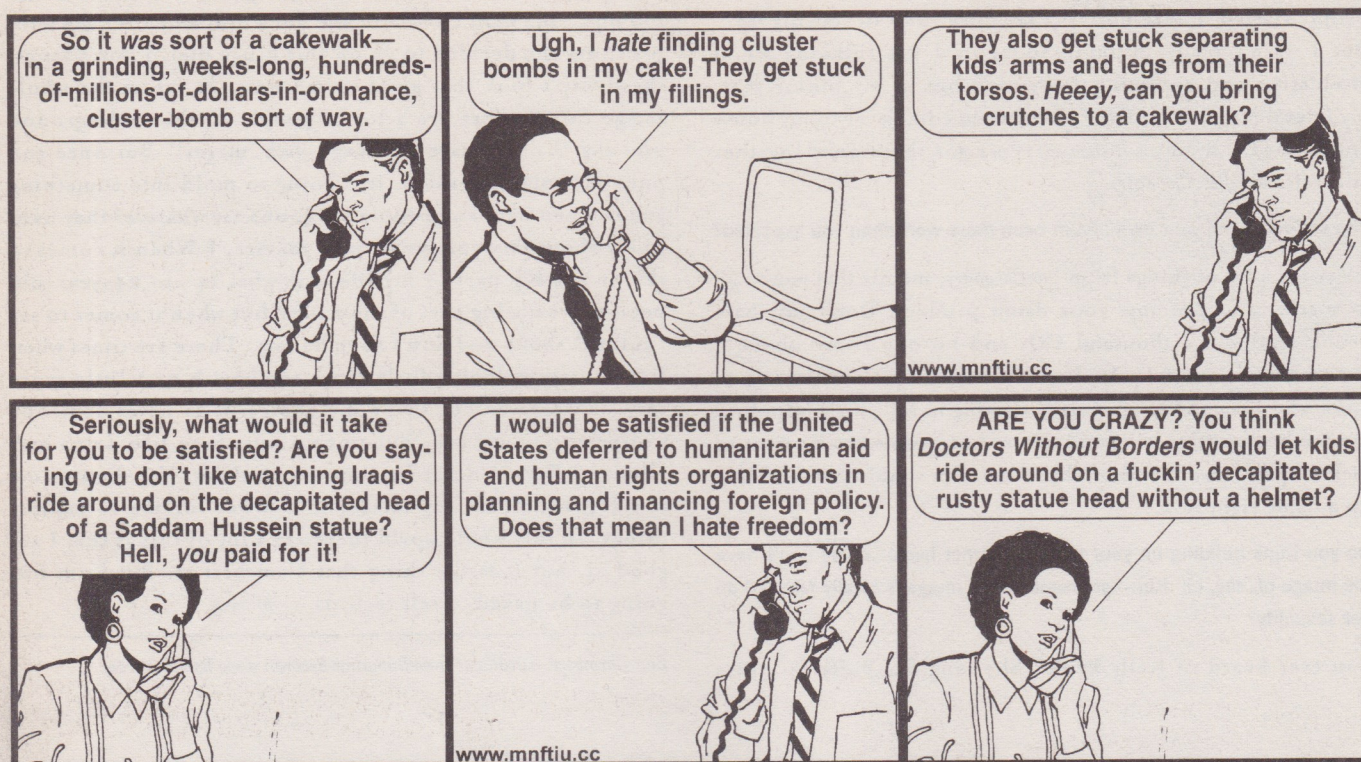
POET TAYLOR MALI WANTS YOU TO BECOME A TEACHER.

Taylor Mali is a man on a mission: he will inspire 1,000 people to become teachers by the year 2006.

Before he became the two-time National Poetry Slam Champion, Mali taught in the New York public school system.

He loves teaching, but his busy touring schedule clashes with the school year. So instead, he uses poetry to persuade his audience to fill his place at the head of the class. His plan is working—so far, he's turned 20 ordinary citizens into the teachers of the future.

Get Your War On BY DAVID REES



A superstar on the poetry slam circuit, Mali appeared in the award-winning independent film *Slam*, and the documentary *Slam Nation*. He published two collections of poetry himself and released several spoken word CDs between 1995 and 2000.

How does your former profession of teacher tie into your current one of poet?

Teaching and acting and poetry are so similar. Two thousand years ago, Horace said that the task of the poet was to instruct and entertain. I say that's the task of the teacher as well: to instruct and entertain. I'm not surprised that so much of my work is influenced by my experiences in the classroom.

How well would you say teachers are paid?

Oh, horribly! In capitalism, the salaries go where the money is, not the responsibility. Teaching is the most disrespected, underrated profession in America—with the possible exception being motherhood. I want to be a spokesman for teaching; I'm telling people it's a noble avenue. I say business and law school can wait. Try teaching for a couple of years. You can make a lot of money doing other things, but you can make a lot of change if you choose to teach. If that's important to you, if you want to do something that matters: teach. There will come a day when we realize that the only true measure of a civilization's greatness is the extent to which it educates and takes care of all its people. And when that day

comes, those of us who knew this now will be seen as heroes.

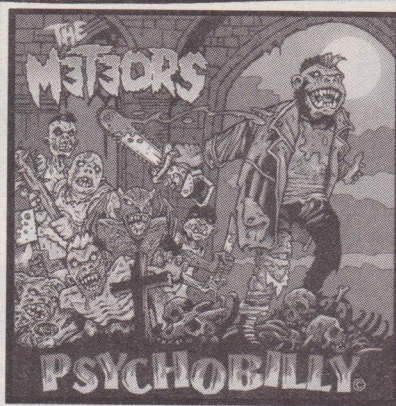
How would you change the way teaching is done?

I think every lesson should begin with, "This is the Earth. This is where we live," and then find a context within that. That way, you're teaching students *how* to think. It's not just a lesson plan or and a set body of knowledge—that's teaching them *what* to think. You need to show them *how* to think and *how* to ask questions. Because of that, teaching is very political. Which is why I want to start every lesson with, "Alright, boys and girls. This is the Earth. This is where we live." Astronomy? Obviously you could begin every lesson that way. Math? "This is the Earth. This is a sphere," you

could do that. And then there's history. In my class, when we'd study Egypt or Mesopotamia, at the end of the year I'd put a map on the exam of a bunch of different areas that we'd studied. I'd put letters on the map. I'd say, "Which of the 26 letters on the map most closely approximates the location of Egypt?" I didn't want to make the test hard; there was one letter that could be Egypt and the next closest thing would be Carthage. If a kid can't tell the difference between Egypt and Carthage, then he *doesn't* know it. Then you have to ask whose fault it was that he didn't know it? Maybe I didn't spend enough time teaching them this stuff. —Will Tupper ©

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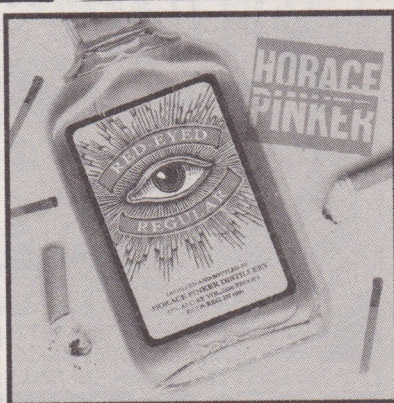


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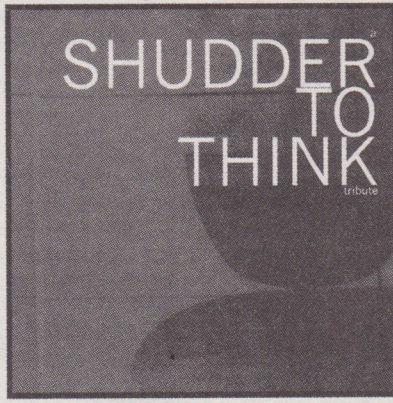
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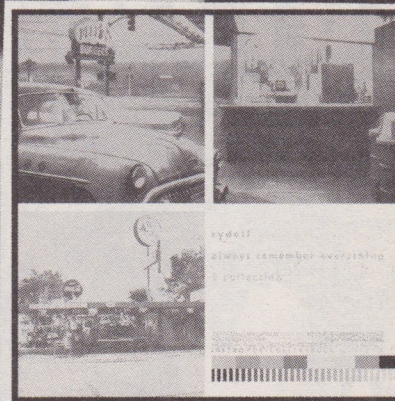
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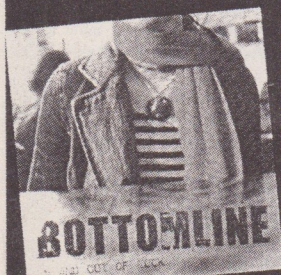
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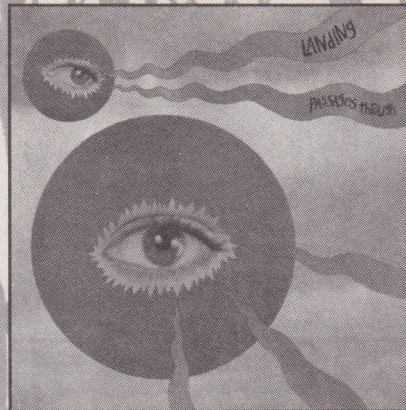
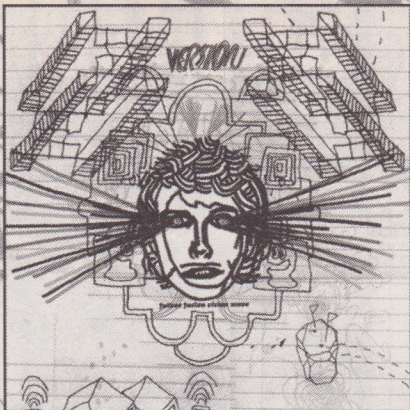
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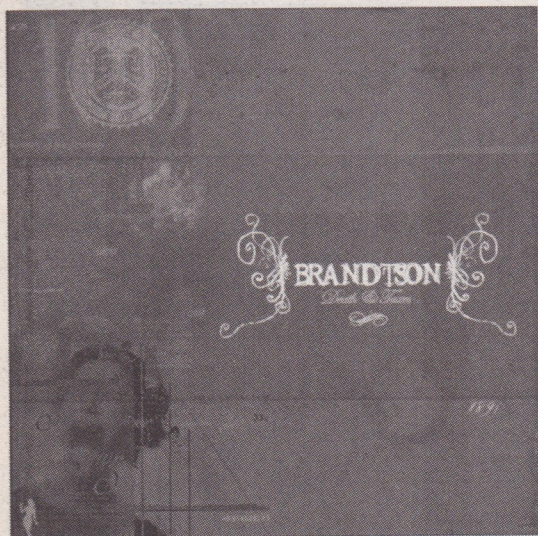
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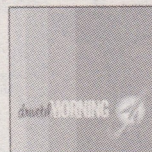


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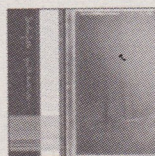
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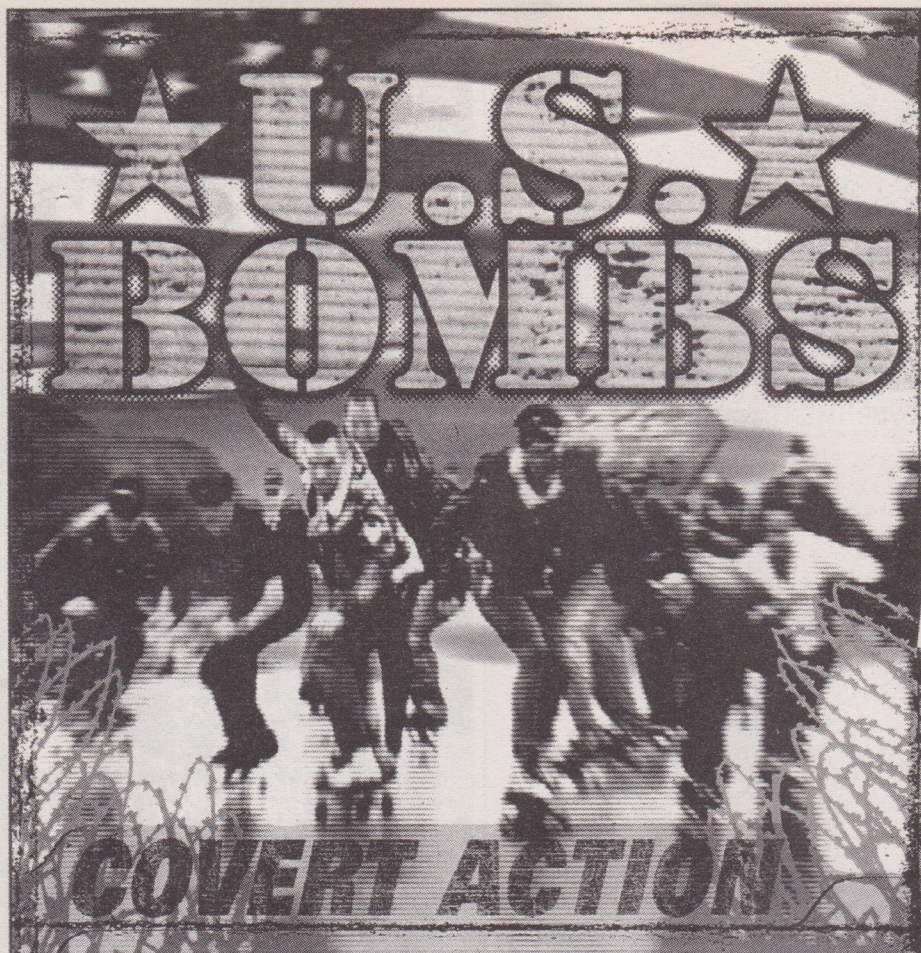
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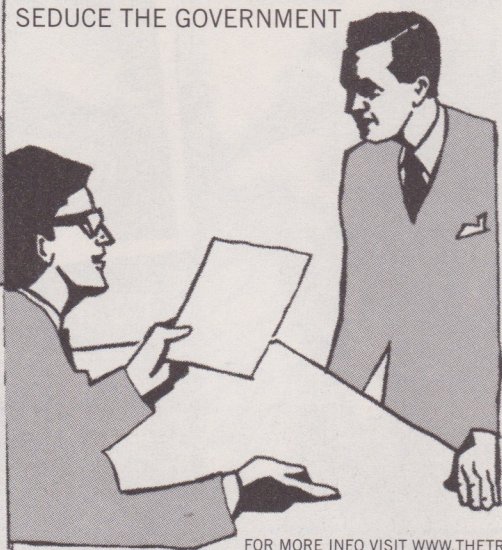
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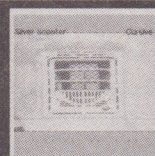


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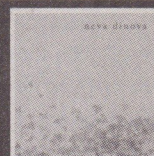
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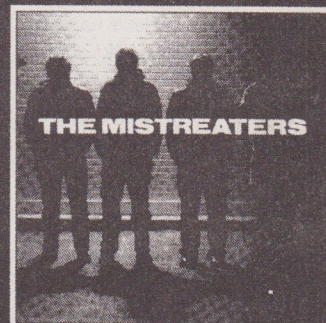
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“You know what you should put in your magazine? An interview with me!” That’s Greg Palast talking. I’d met him approximately two minutes before he uttered those words.

We were both speakers at an independent press event and while I had seen his bi-line on more than a couple drool-worthy articles, I didn’t really know much about the guy currently standing in front of me, eyebrows raised in expectation for the enthusiastic “*of course!*” answer he was obviously waiting for. Instead, he got something somewhere between a stifled “*ngheee?*” and a non-committal “*ynggh.*”

The fact that this interview is now sitting in your lap staring up at you is testament to Palast’s dogged insistence on getting what he wants. I mean really, if the man can get top-secret documents faxed to him directly from ex-Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris that implicate the President’s brother Jeb in election fraud, did I actually expect him to give up trying to chat me up for an interview? Hardly.

“Great! I’ll have my friend Jello Biafra do it! I’ll call him up right now.” With those words, Palast knew he had me hooked. As images of the ex-Dead Kennedy’s frontman and all-around punk rock legend Biafra fumbling with a microcassette recorder flashed through my head, Palast was already dialing his cell phone. By the end of the evening, he’d already heard back (Jello, it turns out, is a huge fan of Greg’s). I had just been made redundant in my own magazine—who needs an editor when the interview subjects can book the biggest names in the biz to interview them? What was next—Don Rickles being interviewed by Ian MacKaye?

I suppose it’s almost secondary that Palast is possibly the most hard-core investigative journalist operating today. A man with an almost preternatural talent for obtaining the exact information he’s not supposed to have, Palast has had his bi-lines attached to some of the biggest scandals of the last decade. He’s revealed sickening facts about the Exxon Valdez disaster; was on top of the Enron scandal back when every other journalist had a hard-on about the company; dug up enough dirt on the 2000 Presidential Election to give you night sweats for weeks; and now has turned his sights onto exposing the ties between the Bin Laden and Bush families.

Let me put it another way: Palast is one of those people that you’re kind of amazed hasn’t been killed yet. And it’s certainly not because his would-be assassins wouldn’t know who he was—he’d probably amble right up to them, give them a firm handshake and palm a business card to each and every one of them. Maybe he’d even give them a copy of his book, signing it “*read this naked—Greg Palast*” like he did with mine. Probably by the end of the night, his killers would have handed their confidential dossiers over to Palast and the next night he’d be his own lead story on the BBC.

In this day and age of corporate ownership of the airwaves and printing presses, Palast is a throwback to a different era. It’s an era where journalists spoke truth to power and helped topple kings. As the wars mount, the economy continues to falter, and our civil rights crumble away it’s good to know that the kings of this world sleep a little less soundly knowing that Palast is out there passing out business cards and getting the stories that will topple them.

Introduction by **Daniel Sinker**

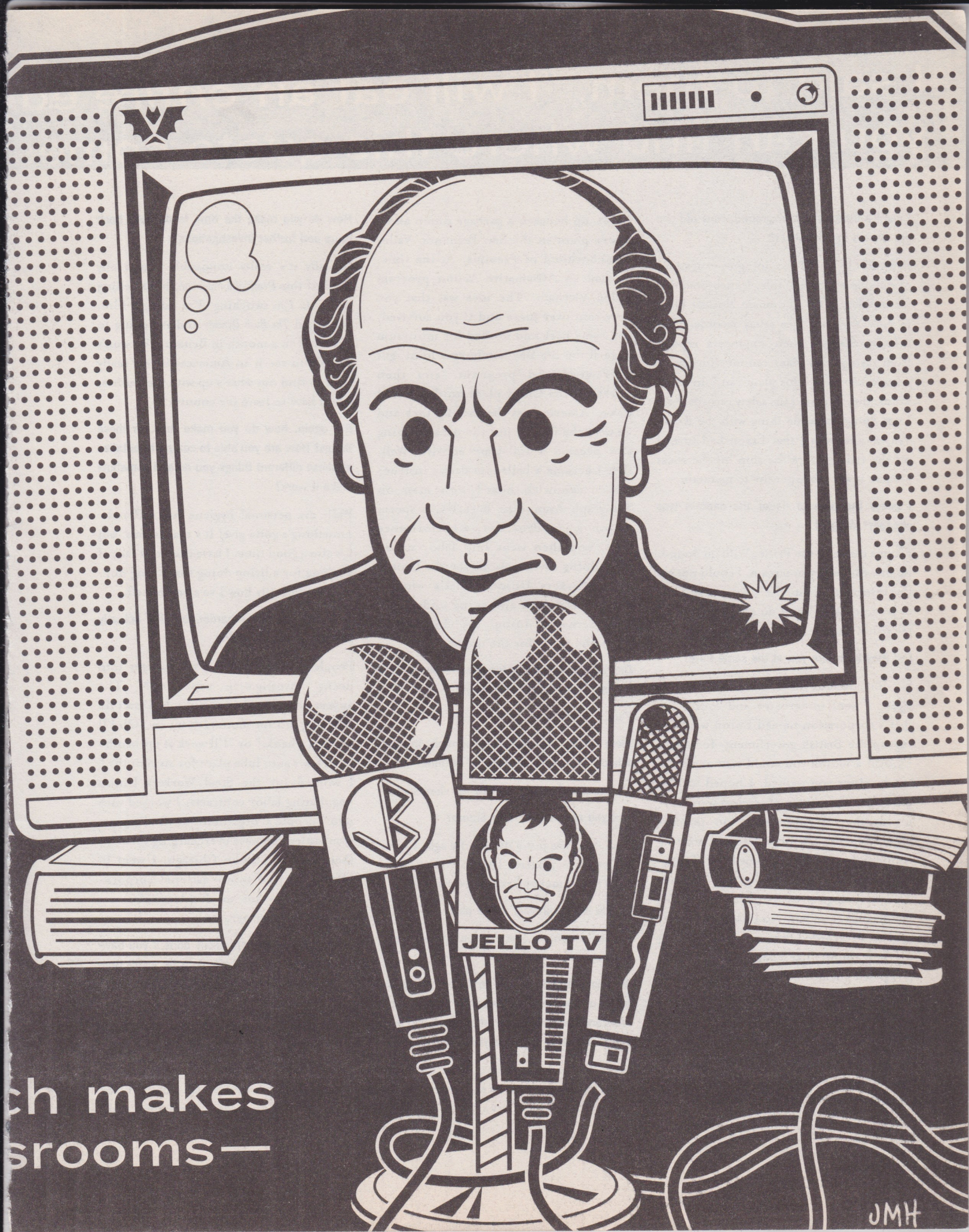
Interview by **Jello Biafra**

Illustration by **Jim Horwatt**

greg palast

interviewed by jello biafra

“I’m called a muckracker, which makes me unemployable in US news that’s good.”



ch makes
rooms—

JMH

I said to them, "I will eat an *entire* edition of you can find where this quote comes

I want a little bit of background. How did you get started in this racket?

Bad fucking luck. I was doing investigations of evil doers. For example, I uncovered that the builders at the Shoreham Nuclear Plant in New York had fake safety records. They literally changed their engineers reports from saying "this plant cannot withstand a seismic event" to "this plant can." In other words, they doctored the safety records. And I was doing the same thing with the Exxon Valdez—uncovering that Exxon had turned off the radar before the ship hit the rocks because it was too expensive to maintain.

I guess the plan to liquor the captain was cheaper? [laughs]

From a canoe in the Prince William Sound, no one can hear you scream. I could not get this information into the US press, so I had to go into "exile" and do reports for BBC television and the *Guardian* newspapers.

Did they both hire you at the same time?

No, the *Guardian* hired me first. Then in 1998, I went undercover and found out that a corporation named Enron was buying up the British government—for about £5,000 a month you could rent any cabinet minister you wanted. I hoped to find out if that these same characters were buying up the US government too—this was back when the US press was still treating Kenneth Lay like he was some kind of combination of Elvis Presley and Mother Theresa bringing us the wonders of free market and electricity—so I went undercover. I tape-recorded these characters selling off their country like a bags of sugar! When I exposed them on the front page of the *Observer* [the *Guardian*'s weekend edition], the next day BBC Television asked if they could hire me to put me on the nightly news.

But how did you get there? Where were you in your late teens and early 20s and how did you do all the stuff that you're doing now?

I grew up between a garbage dump and a power plant in the San Fernando Valley neighborhood of Pacoima. At the time, we had an Affirmative Action program called Vietnam. The idea was that you were sent over there and if you survived, you came back and worked for minimum wage at the Big Boy hamburger joint, got your girlfriend pregnant, and then worked at the Chevy plant until it closed down. America was the carving fork and we were the food. I just ran off screaming and became a full-time activist. Well, first I became a ballroom dance instructor, a sandwich board sign man on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, a sperm donor, a jazz drummer, a performance poet, and then went into labor union work doing investigations for the United Steel Workers Union. That's when I started digging in and going undercover and actually doing my Lieutenant Columbo thing for the union.

Did you really try out for cheerleader in high school? I heard that somewhere.

Yeah, I was a very cheerful guy.

Were male cheerleaders common in your school? They were *unheard of* in mine.

Who said I was trying out as a *male* cheerleader?

And you also tried out for *Stomp*?

Yeah, that was just a little while ago, I actually tried to pretend I was a young guy—I wore the homeboy hat and everything.

So you were a dancer in the past?

I'm still a dancer, just no one will pay me to do it anymore.

How do you find the time to do everything you do: do undercover reporting, write articles and a book, and you have two children. Plus, you're on a book tour. How often are you actually home?

I take the spawn with me. Not to the war zones, obviously, but by the age of six they had full passports. They schlep along.

How do you make the time to do both book tours and further investigations?

Actually it's really impossible. I'm really tired of this *Death of a Salesman*, book selling thing, so I'm switching—I'm doing a film. It's called *The Bush Dynasty* and it's going to come out in a month in Britain. You won't be able to see it in America—if you really want to find out what's up with the Bushes, you'll have to leave the country.

But again, how do you make time for these things? How are you able to compartmentalize all these different things you do and somehow make it work?

Well, my personal hygiene has suffered—something's gotta give! It's murderous, but it's also a good time. I have this great fear of working for a living doing something normal. It's actually how I've saved myself.

You work 10 times harder, but it's actually something you like doing.

People always say, "How do you get into doing investigative reporting?" The answer is don't take any old job. Don't do anything just for money; don't say "Oh I'll work in a bank," or "I'll work at my brother in law's auto lube place for six months." I worked for the Steel Workers Union negotiating labor contracts; I worked with poor people's organizations finding gas companies that were overcharging them on their heating bills in Chicago; I went to Mexico to find multi-national corporations. You've got to decide you're not going to be your parents.

This is obviously more easily done if you have a trust fund and can afford to be a full time activist. What about people that don't?

Like I said, I grew up between the power plant and city dump—I didn't have a trust fund. I'm not like George Bush who believes America is the land of opportunity—that *anyone* can be born into a rich family—I just decided I couldn't take a normal job and I

tion of your newspaper if from." They couldn't

never did. A paycheck is the worst drug there is—there's nothing worse. Never put yourself in the position where someone you wouldn't urinate on is telling you what to do at 11 in the morning—that's just too grim. You just *have* to say no. It's better to eat garbage.

Did you go to journalism school?

I never *touched* journalism school. That's like poison; that's death. That's where they pull your brains out and give you a hair-do, bleached teeth, and a way to talk into a television camera and say, "Here I am standing in front of the White House". ¶ I think that Tom Brokaw died several years ago and has been pieced back together as an animatronic robot. His ratings have actually gone up since he was replaced by a committee of corporate marketing men! [laughs] I'm called a muckracker, which makes me unemployable in US news-rooms—that's good.

It seems like there has been a transformation over my lifetime where instead of reporters being embedded with corporations for investigative purposes, the corporations embedded themselves in the journalism world and now they can pull a lot more strings. In your book, you tell the stories that you're not allowed to see on US television. But it's not just US broadcast journalism, you're hard on the *New York Times* too.

It's all the news that shits in print. Between what they leave out and what they fabricate, there's kind of a fine balance. ¶ They ruined the career of a black congresswoman named Cynthia McKinney. The *New York Times* wrote that she said that Bush knew about September 11th in advance and wouldn't tell anyone about it. But actually she was calling for an investigation and they misquoted her. I called the *New York Times* and said, "Where'd you get that quote?" They said, "Well, it's all over the place." I said, "This is the *New*

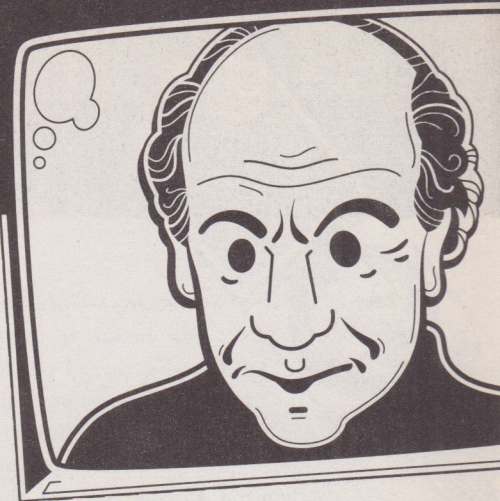
York Times, you should have a better source than that." But they couldn't find it. The *Atlantia Journal Constitution*, which is the paper of record in her legislative district, repeated the same fabricated quote something like 15 times. It ruined her career. I said to them, "I will eat an *entire* edition of your newspaper if you can find where this quote comes from." They couldn't. This is the kind of news you get.

Somehow you've honed a skill for actually being able to read and understand complicated documents and being able to cut through the bullshit, like in the McKinney case. Where did that skill come from? Because when I see some of that stuff, I ask if somebody can please translate it into English.

I didn't graduate from college or even high school. Instead, I started working under cover investigating that little right-wing, proto-fascist Nobel Prize winner Milton Friedman and got a "degree" on international finance. There was an evil little group called the Chicago Boys, who's purpose was to work with General Pinochet, the Chilean dictator. Later they began to do experiments—little economic Frankensteins—on how to turn the world into their right-wing vision that would eliminate the government and allow corporations to march across the face of the earth unimpeded. I got on the inside—literally undercover—with these guys and I thought, "That *ain't* gonna happen. No one's going to buy this right-wing, maniacal, Margaret Thatcher / Ronald Reagan stuff." This was just some bogus free market philosophy, and now it's fucking *ruining* the planet.

Yeah, now we're told that it's inevitable that everything should be privatized, so we should simply accept that Bechtel should not only run our water supply, but Bolivia's too.

Exactly. The only difference between Bolivia and America is that the Bolivians are resisting. ¶ But ultimately, that's what I



do: I now go in and hunt down documents. I have things like inside documents from the World Bank that show that, basically, the captains of industry, the looters of financial empire, and the media moguls all get into a room and plan our future for us. This isn't conspiracy-nut stuff—I have photocopies of the minutes of their meetings! I include the documents in my book.

In order for you to get these types of documents, does this mean that there are concerned whistle-blowers littered throughout the spy agencies and corporate power houses?

Yeah. At the World Bank, there are a few people inside that are absolutely sick to their stomach because of the shit that they are being required to do. I have 5,000 pages of secret documents from the World Bank and the IMF which are plans—and this is *really* berserk and off the wall, but I have the documents—to rearrange the economies of Argentina, Bolivia, Tanzania, and Turkey.

What natural resources are they hoping to plunder from Argentina?

Well, actually Argentina is an oil rich nation. They are an oil and gas exporter, but they are required to secretly sell off their state oil companies and their gas companies. In 1988, the Minister of Public Work had his arm twisted by world financiers to sell off the nation's gas and water system. He got a call from Jebbie Bush saying, "My daddy was just elected President and he certainly would appreciate it if you would give your nations gas systems to a company called Enron." I was just

When the Gore campaign as heard it was me, they said,



able to discover that he was fronting for what turned out to be a really corrupt deal.

According to the Minister, Jeb's deal involved paying Argentina at one-fifth of the world's price for natural gas. When Jeb was not around, this guy asked Enron's lobbyists, "Why would I possibly give you our gas for one-fifth the world's price?" The answer was, "There's a lot left over that could just fall into your Swiss bank account." ¶ There's all this information on the Bush family that you can not get shown on American television or reported in the papers, like how the Bushes have been flapping for the guys protecting Al Qaeda. I have put it on BBC. I have here with me a document marked "Secret", from the 199-i Washington office of the FBI, and it says . . .

. . . can I ask how you got it?

These FBI agents showed up at our offices, ask us some dumb-ass questions and then *accidentally* left a file on our desk. They called up later and asked, "We left a file on your desk, you haven't looked at it have you?" [laughs] Then they said, "We'll be back in a half hour for it." You might think they maybe *wanted* us to see it. Anyway, it was a National Security document, that says it's opening an investigation on two members of a "suspected" terrorist organization. But the FBI wasn't allowed to investigate it until September 13, 2001. Who weren't they allowed to investigate? Page 2: two members of the Bin Laden family living in the USA. Why not? Because we're told by the Bushes that Osama is the black sheep and the rest of the Bin Ladens are all squeaky clean. Actually, they backed Bush family enterprises, most people don't realize that.

How so?

The Bin Laden's chief financial operative

in America backed one of Bush's three loser oil companies.

Arbusto Energy?

Yeah, and after Arbusto there was Spectrum, and there was also money behind the Carlyle Group, which is Big Daddy Bush's arms dealing operation. Our former president actually represents the company to the Saudis for their arms dealing operations. Anyway, George W—who's made millions in the oil business—left several hundred holes in Texas and came up with nothing. However, he became very wealthy, even though he never found any oil. Well, every time one of his little businesses was about to dive under, some sheik came out of the clouds and saved him, including Sheikh Abdullah Baksh. Remember that name because at this moment, European intelligence agencies are looking to speak to him whether or not his money has ended up in the hands of Al-Qaeda. In other words, the same checkbook that may be funding Al Qaeda is the same checkbook that funded one of the Bush enterprises, Harken Oil. ¶ Now I'm not saying that George Bush knew about the September 11th attack in advance. At BBC television, we say that anybody that accuses George Bush of having advance knowledge is going to have to have *serious* documentation.

Tonight, you were pointing out how we helped supply Saddam Hussein with his weapons of mass destruction and helped create Osama bin Laden. Who do you think will be the next despot we support that turns on us?

I think it's going to be the dictator of Pakistan, Musharraf—this frightening, nuclear-armed berserker. He has an operation called the ISI [Inter Services Intelligence], which is the Pakistani secret police. They put the Taliban into power in Afghanistan which was ultimately supported by Osama bin Laden and his operation. Our

president has recently taken pictures with him—the two of them look like they are going to the prom together! Twelve years from now, President Jeb Bush is going to tell us we've got to go into Pakistan to get the Killer of Karachi.

Speaking of documents, you have an incredible story about how Lockheed Martin is cleaning up in this war on terrorism with the Virginia class—or V-Class—submarines. One of the hardest parts I find to believe is that they are seriously proposing spending 1.6 billion dollars a piece for 36 of these submarines simply so we can put nine Marines at a time inside of a torpedo and fire them over the Iraqi wetlands! So then what happens? They land—clunk, clunk, clunk—on the ground, open the hatch of their '50s sci-fi movie spaceship and get carried off as POWs? That seems ludicrous. Where did you find the part about the torpedo proposal?

I asked the Lockheed Corporation. The Bush Administration is ordering a bunch of U-Boats that were originally meant to hunt Soviet submarines. Of course, there are no more Soviet submarines, so these guys came up with a submarine to sneak commandos onto beaches. It's a pretty big boat.

How big is it exactly?

It's about 20 times the size of your average church.

So it would barely fit in a zeppelin hangar?

Yeah, exactly. This thing is a *monster*. So, I asked how do you sneak this giant sub up to the beach?" They said, "We're not sneaking it up to the beach, we've reconfigured the torpedos to stick nine Marines in them and shoot them onto the beach." You can laugh at this stuff, but our president has ordered 36 of these at 1.6 billion bucks a pop! That's the con.

Did you find this torpedo theory on one of their public sites.

asked who the jouranlist was and they "We hate that son of a bitch."

No, I called them up. It's amazing what they will tell you because they're arrogant. They don't realize that you find this a bit strange.

Not to mention amusing—at least until you realize that's the reason there's no money for schools.

The same day they announced there wasn't enough money for medical care for pregnant women on Medicaid was the same day they added another billion dollars to create a DNA database on the *entire* US population for the FBI. Of course, they say it's about the poor missing kids on the milk carton—it's always about them. But for the first time in American history the FBI will have the right to go into *anyone's* bank account, medical records, and even use DNA. This is their way to make you all love the police state; not only go along with it, but to *beg* to be a part of it! It's part con and part payoff, and they're putting ChoicePoint in charge of it.

The same people who rigged the Florida election?

Yeah well, they got out of the voter purging business, and they started a little operation called ChoicePoint Cares. Now, according to *Forbes* magazine, ChoicePoint, is the big winner in the war on terror. They picked the president, and now they're scoring the big contracts, like this one with the FBI. It's no contract bidding, baby! ¶ Their part of the election story starts about five months before the 2000 election. When Florida Secretary of State Catherine Harris removed 57,700 people from the state's voter rolls. They were all supposed felons—in fact they were innocent. Over half of those people on that list were black. That's *tens* of thousands of black people's votes. Let's face it: they were probably going to vote for Al Gore.

What amazes me is how Catherine Harris managed to be the Secretary of State in charge of running a clean election and Bush's

campaign manager at the same time and didn't wind up in jail for conflict of interest.

No one would accept the fact that they were knocking out black voters. It was done in a very sophisticated, electronic manner. I was watching British television on election night and black voter after voter said they couldn't vote because their name wasn't on the voter rolls. I thought—in my little conspiracy-nut mind—that there must be some kind of computer program that was erasing their names. Well, sure enough, I contacted Katherine Harris' offices and was able to obtain two computer disks that had the program that wiped out black voters. It simply erased their names, saying they were criminals, and they weren't eligible voters.

Not allowed to vote because they were convicted felons?

Right. But go through the list and you'll find names like Thomas Cooper—he was convicted on January 30, 2007.

When I was speaking at Florida State in Tallahassee, locals there told me that at the so-called black university across the tracks the students there showed up at their student union to vote on election day, 2000, and the building was locked.

It gets uglier than that. In the blackest county in Florida, Gadsden, one in eight votes weren't counted. Why? Because there was some wrong marking on the ballot. They had the same ballots and the same machines as the white county next door, Tallahassee. But in Tallahassee if there was any mistake on the ballot, the machines are set up to reject the ballot and give you another chance to vote. In this black county if you made a mistake, the machine ate the ballot and voided your vote so you didn't vote at all!

So all of this work went into fixing the election in one of our 50 states . . .

Well, I haven't investigated the other 49.

But what I don't understand is how could those people have known that fixing Florida would be that important?

Well, I think it's two things: first, they knew that Florida was a swing; and second, they didn't just steal in Florida. I think they stole it in other states too, I just put my focus on the really sophisticated job they did in Florida.

Do you think this is normal and happens in all elections, or was 2000 an aberration?

There used to be grandfather clauses, KKK violence, retail theft, and monkeying around with absentee ballots, but 2000 was another level. The culpable are more anonymous when they're using computers to knock out tens of thousands of black voters because you can always blame the machines instead of people. Now they're trying to pass the Martin Luther King Voter Reform Act. Instead of saying "No more" to that shit, they're taking it and spreading it to all 50 states by computerizing the voting rolls of all 50 states! It's going to cause big problems. ¶ This week I'm marching in Birmingham with Martin Luther King III who is sick to his stomach that his father's name is being used on the name of a law which could eliminate a million black voters. It's sick. We're back asking the same question Martin Luther King, Jr asked 40 years ago: Can black people vote in America?

So when did you first turn up that the election was blatantly crooked?

This is what has gotta make you sick about our nation: I found out about the voter purging three weeks *before* the election. Al Gore was still very much in the race. I published it and it was news all over the planet. When the Gore campaign asked who the jouranlist was and they heard it was me, they said, "We hate

I want to make the truth about the Bush Family a fucking virus that you can't get off the web because they can't kill it

that son of a bitch." They're all buddies with Tony Blair and I exposed his corporate employers.

Nevertheless, if the guy really put so much of his life—decades of packaging himself to be president—why didn't he run with the information?

Well, his race won and his class won—all the white guys' votes were counted and all the rich guys' votes were counted. In the end, his sense of class solidarity was far more important than which one of the con men actually won. Just like in the old Skull and Bones club, who is party chairman for the week doesn't mean very much—they all take turns.

In other words, it's a one party state masquerading as a two party state.

Yeah. We're all eternal refugees; we're all stateless. We've lost our nation.

To what, a corporate coup?

We didn't have an election, we had an auction. Republicans spent \$440 million dollars getting Bush into the White House, so you have to look at who won the bid for the White House. You're talking Exxon, Enron, and others. They're not telling the people what kind of business they're doing, so while the government has you distracted with Iraq, you need to check out what the corporations are doing somewhere else. Look at the stories coming out of Venezuela right now.

What's happening?

Hugo Chavez is the Nelson Mandela of Venezuela. For five centuries, 80 percent of the population—the brown and poor—were getting screwed. Chavez wants to right the situation and end the economic

apartheid in his country. One way he's doing this is by governing the royalties Exxon and British Petroleum pay for Venezuelan oil. That may be his death warrant. The newspapers in America call him a nut, a fruitcake, and a would-be dictator; but this man was elected by 56 percent of the vote. I was down there and saw all these white people marching against Chavez. In the *New York Times* they say, "Thousands marching to oust Chavez". But they don't show you the rest of the picture—that twice as many people marching for him. It's fascinating to watch this happen, but all you'll see in the papers in the US is the white people marching. The brown people just disappear like smoke.

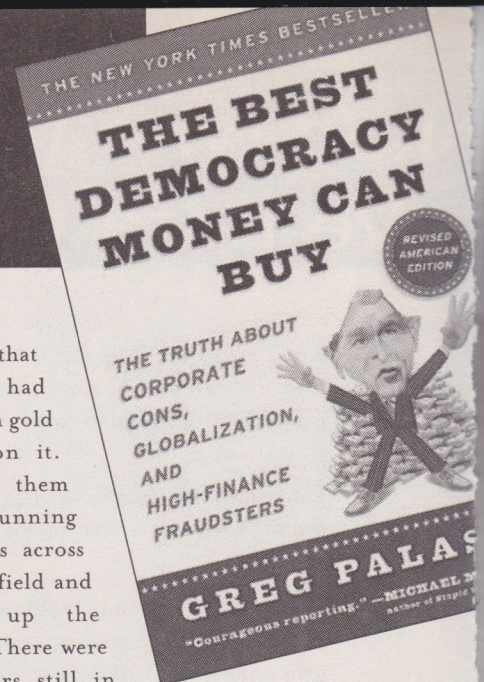
So how do you get through to the people that believe everything they see on CNN or FOX News or the *New York Times* because that's all their exposed to? What about people who are just really confused because their exposed to sources that contradict each other? How do you cultivate good bullshit detectors?

You have to kick in their TV sets! Or tell them that there is a power outage and they have to turn off that cesspool of disinformation.

But they probably won't though, so what do you do?

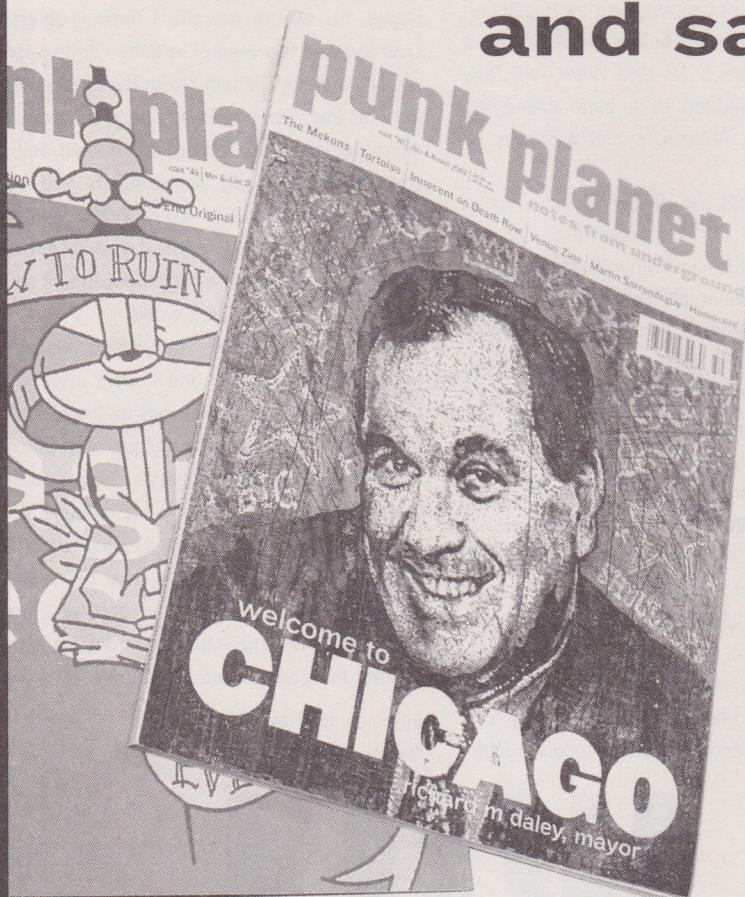
You have to make them do something they've probably become allergic to: They're going to have to read. They're going to have to get on the Internet. The thing is, once you have the information, you're fucked, you're stuck, you've gotta act on it. ¶ I talked tonight about George Bush's goldmine company, Barrick. This shit's never been in the American newspapers, but in 1996 Barrick was buying

property that already had Tanzanian gold miners on it. They got them off by running bulldozers across the gold field and sealing up the miners! There were 50 miners still in the mines when they sealed their pits; they buried 50 miners *alive*. This is where the Bush family gold comes from. I reported that in Britain and around the world and couldn't get *shit* in the United States. ¶ This is what I'm talking about: once you know that, you're *stuck* with that information—you're stuck with the lives and the souls of those dead miners and you've got to do something about it. Now you've heard about the theft of the election in Florida, you're stuck with that information—the electronic lynching of the black voter—and you've got to do something about it. ¶ When you go to my website, you have to sign up that you will continue to keep the information going and send it out to your friends. Steal it. I'm not copyrighting it. My publisher Penguin is losing their minds because I'm giving it away for free! I want people to know. I want to make the truth about the Bush Family known. I want to make the truth about the Bush Family a fucking virus that you can't get off the web because they can't kill it. They can threaten the publisher, they can threaten the newspaper, but they can't threaten all the websites with the content—they can't threaten us all. ©



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There are some things you should know about Will Oldham. First off, he hates interviews. Always has. In fact, for years he refused to do them entirely—often claiming that they had nothing to do with his art, his music, or his interests, so really, what's the point? After a while, he caved in. There were conditions, of course. As is the case with most things that come across Oldham's rather odd career path, this would have to be done *his way* or not at all. Oldham has never sent the press his records or invited them to his shows, so with the few interviews he has granted, there have always been particulars—but we'll get to that later. There are still some things about Will that I need to tell you.

Oldham is 33 now. He was born all those years ago in the suburbs of Louisville, Kentucky. Though many assumed otherwise, Oldham never thought much of being a musician. In fact, he fancied himself an actor. At the age of nine, he began taking elementary drama classes. In high school, while his friends were busy starting bands and poring over records by Hüsker Dü, Oldham could often be found pursuing his interest in theater. He soon joined the Actors Theatre of Louisville, then left for Los Angeles. Though he landed some roles out west—perhaps you saw him in the 1987 film *Matewan* or in the ABC made-for-TV movie *The Baby Jessica Story*—Oldham was running in circles. He abandoned acting and found himself involved in a series of dizzying moves that you could never confuse for a straight line. In less than a year, Oldham went from Los Angeles to

New York to Paris and then Virginia, where he wound up living with his brother working construction. But that didn't last long, either.

So it was in the back of his mind, or maybe in the middle of the night—or maybe both—that Will Oldham started writing songs. Dark and beautiful songs that could sound as timeless as the Old Testament or as hopeful as a dusty hymn. Oldham's brothers and friends had all stuck with music over the years, and together they helped Will as he began putting together a group of delicate, country-tinged ballads. The result would be his debut album, a record titled *There Is No-One What Will Take Care Of You* credited to a band called the Palace Brothers. Amazingly, that was over 10 years ago.

Most of what has happened since, you're probably aware of. You know that Oldham began changing his name around—dropping the Palace title and eventually coming around to the *nom de plume* Bonnie 'Prince' Billy—and that he's often avoided journalists like the black plague. You know that people called the music he created "alternative country" and that they centered on his rather eccentric image far more than they probably should have. Yeah, you probably know all of this. But the one thing you don't know—or, more likely, fail to realize—about Will Oldham is that he is actually a whole lot like you and me. There's just one small difference: If you sent me an e-mail tomorrow, I probably wouldn't sit around awestruck reading it.

Which, for the past week, is exactly how it's been. After sending a rather hopeless inter-

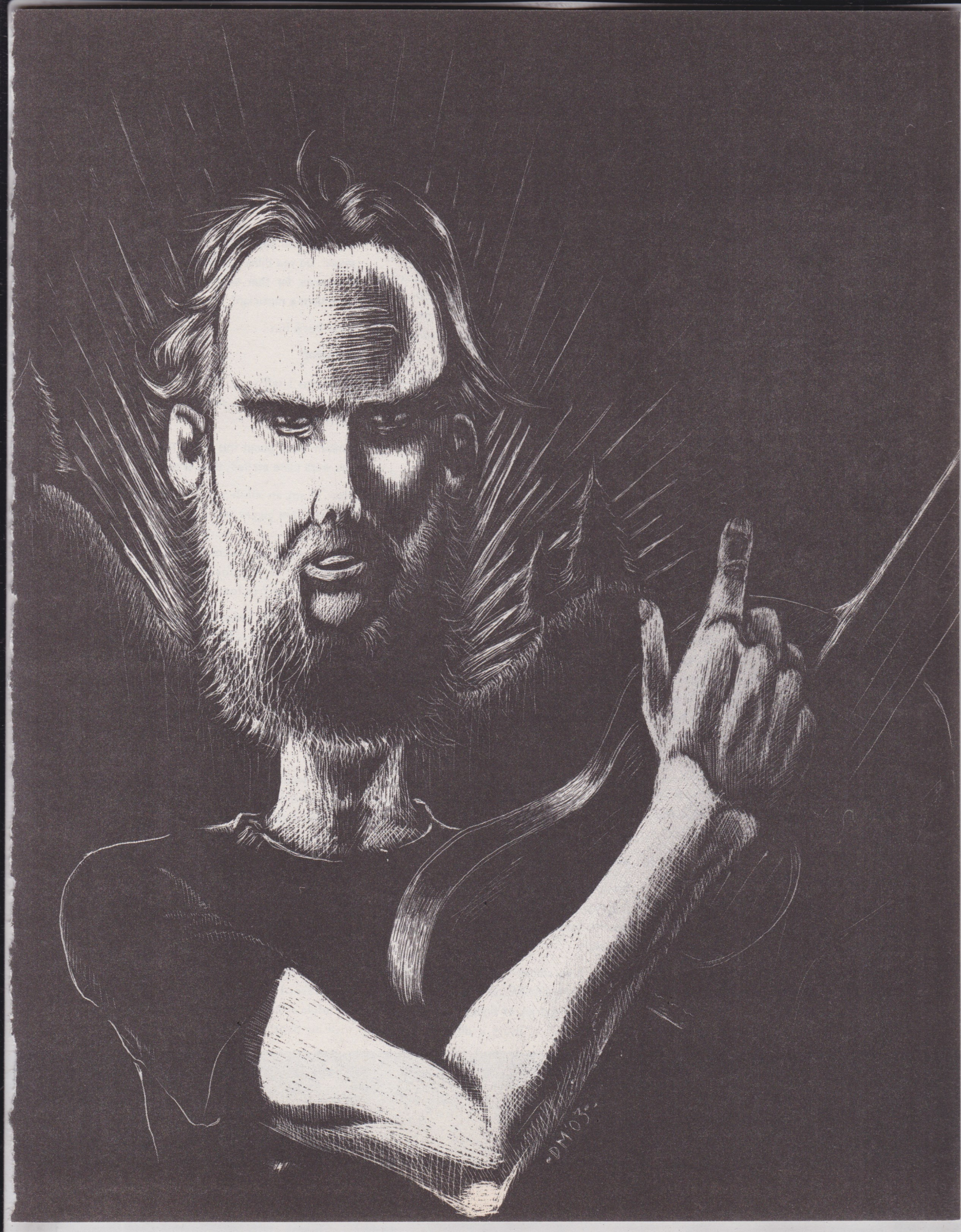
view request to his longtime label Drag City this spring, it was a bit of a shock to hear that Oldham was interested in chatting with *Punk Planet*. Since the winter release of his latest album *Master And Everyone*—a hushed, glorious retreat into guitar and vocal melloncholly that ranks alongside some of his best work yet—Oldham has been even more quiet than usual. Thus, when I was told by his publicist that the interview would have to be done over e-mail and under his own personal limitations (again, his way or not all), I happily obliged. Over the past few years, I've gotten quite a kick out of watching Oldham shake the music press from his trail. Sometimes he's been out there all alone, letting the music speak for itself as his contemporaries gladly shake hands and buy mixed drinks and give away complimentary tickets to their shows. To this day, Will Oldham remains a pioneer and a *truly* independent spirit in a not-so-independent world.

What follows, then, is an edited version of our "conversation." Will and I spent a week of late evenings and early mornings trading e-mails. As it worked, I'd send him a group of questions before I went to sleep at night and he'd send me the answers when I awoke in the morning. The resulting piece is by no means a definitive look at Will Oldham—after all, that's what his records are for. Instead, it's a random and, at times, bizarre group of e-mails that I got from one of the greatest living songwriters of our time.

Interview by **Trevor Kelley**

Illustration by **Dustin Mertz**

WILL OLDHAM



Do you find it strange that *Punk Planet* wants to talk with you?

No, I think it's good.

Good, then we're in agreement. But I wouldn't say that most people would think that. I'd go as far as saying that many people wouldn't even think of the word punk when they hear the name Will Oldham.

Yeah, people probably tend to think otherwise. It's OK.

Well, by doing that, I think most people dismiss that you're actually a lot like them. When I run through some of your background—grew up in the suburbs, listened to bands like Hüsker Dü, hung out with bands like Squirrel Bait, went to all ages shows—it's apparent that you're not at all unlike the people who read *Punk Planet*. But people don't tend to think that, do they?

No, they think that I have a passing knowledge of Lambchop or the Jayhawks, or that I like the Byrds—which I do not. When I was 11 years old I went to a matinee show at a place in Louisville called the Beat Club. My brother Ned was playing in one of the bands that day—it may have been called Some Boody Pudding—and during his set, I was lifted from my feet by someone and hauled into the pit, mostly high above the heads of the pogo-ers. Seeing my brother and all of his friends and acquaintances up on stage or in basements or wherever making excellent and fucked-up music made me realize that this is something you can live in. Because I so often saw things done right—and, that is, right in front of my eyes—I think I felt that the closer we stayed to what we do, the better it would be.

Would you consider yourself a social person?

Well, yes. I like people and I like to spend my time in the company of others. I don't understand the question.

It has to do with the music, actually. The last Bonnie 'Prince' Billy record, *Ease Down The Road*, felt very social to me. You had your friends like Harmony Korine or Matt and

David, who are in Zwan now, come in and play on the recording. You had all of these people playing with you—just a huge group of friends gathering together to enjoy the act of making music. Inevitably, the new one, *Master And Everyone*, feels like just the opposite. For the most part, it's just you.

It wasn't as premeditated as all that, but *Master And Everyone* seems to say something about the joy of an individual as an individual. That seems to be what the record is about. *Ease Down The Road* was deliberate. A lot of the music playing is in some way directed toward illuminating, creating, and maintaining a community.

Both records, I think, concern themselves with joy. One seems to be about the joy of friendship, the other, as you've said, the joy of solitude. Does that reflect how they were made or the life that went into them?

I don't know about that.

That's fair. Let's talk about someone else's music then. I've always been curious about this: Why do you like Mariah Carey so much?

I especially—and maybe only—like *Butterfly* and half of *Rainbow*. I think that this is because of what she was going through at that time and how she was able to express it, and the way she did this with a finely-honed machine of a voice. Really, what's the difference between her *Butterfly* and my *Master And Everyone*?

Are you asking me? I don't know. With some discretion I will say that I'm familiar with both records. I think, as far as common themes, some would say the difference between *Butterfly* and *Master And Everyone* is everything. Others would say nothing at all. What would you say?

Nothing. Because you or whoever is reading this would do better to listen to both records and figure it out. If you or he or she cares.

I guess it all comes back to this idea of joy. Both *Butterfly* and *Master And Everyone* seem to be about the joy of finding yourself again after a period of living a different—maybe

even more stable—life. Is that where you see the connection? Is that what you're getting at here? I imagine this is going to be one of those questions you don't really answer, huh?

But you answered your own question—and very well.

Another topic, then. You've often said that there really is no other place for you in this life, that your capabilities begin and end with music. Do you think you were made by god or whomever for that very purpose? That you were born a musician?

I was born but . . .

But what?

What can I tell you? If I wasn't made for doing what I do, I shouldn't have been made at all.

Hmmm. How about this then: Tell me when you were more excited: then or now?

Now. I am an adult now. My freedom is greater. I am bigger and stronger; a deeper voice with more memories. It's *way* better now. It may be the memories and the ability to make more informed decisions, but mostly it's the freedom.

One of the things I read about you and that I found a bit strange is that you try not to communicate with your fans. I think the exact way that you put it was that you only want them to know you through your songs. I find that kind of sad. I mean, really, aren't you afraid that you're missing out on one of the greatest parts of this?

I don't want to advertise my life. Feeling connected to an actor or a singer should not translate into a need to have further communication with that person. Doesn't some of the joy and solace come from having a thoroughly uncomplicated and emotional connection to a song, a book, or a movie? If I think Jack Nicholson is a great actor, I do not care if he is also a beekeeper or a pedophile. But if my uncle had any of that going on, I *would* care. I do not want to meet Nelson Mandela or Mike Watt. I want to hang out with my brother. But if I do end up get-

ting to know someone through this performer/listener exchange—which happens all of the time, through whatever peculiar circumstance—then great. I try to worry and care for the people in my immediate circle of friends and family. I hope the audience does the same. I fucking love, love, love my audience.

As an artist, would you say that you should fear losing control?

Golly, I hope not. With me it seems to be the case. It's a balance. There are things that can be completely left to the wind and other things that should be paid attention to. I think that when people who have been involved with music for a long time start to take the advice of often well-intentioned managers, booking agents, record company blokes, and writers, than what they do can slip away from them. *That's* where the issue of control comes in. Once you learn something you can start from there. There is no end.

Many of the things you do seem to represent that. All of these decisions you make—like changing your name, releasing records sporadically, refusing to do interviews, playing far-flung places—they seem to be about control. I think people often view these decisions as anti-commercial, or counter-productive, or maybe even punk rock. Would you say that, to some degree, all of those assessments are about right?

I would say that all of those assessments have something to them. From my point of view, "counter-productive" is the one that seems to apply the least. I don't think the audience thinks of these actions as counter-productive. At least not the ones who really listen to the music. The funny thing and the good thing is that these are just things that I do. What others would have you do often feels wrong because it is wrong, even though it is the easiest plan to enact or understand. Sometimes just stopping and thinking for a second can make all of the difference in the world.

You once said that if the general public welcomed one of your songs, the logical thing to do would be to retire or not make music any-

more, because you couldn't make it the same way again. Do you still believe that?

I make music from the ground up. If the ground were to disappear, what could I do?

Despite that, has the temptation ever been there to check it out? Aren't you ever curious about what would happen?

The temptation to check it out has been there, yeah. But, to quote a popular singer, "I do not want what I haven't got." Ultimately it seems that the mainstream way that you are referring to simply means relegating responsibility and claiming ignorance as a path to bliss. The resources available to a major label are vast, but it's like big politics. The people don't really belong in it, nor do they have access to it, because the ones who control it have absolutely no faith in the wisdom or decisions of the people. Doing things the mainstream way seems to mean—in the cases you are referring to and in most cases indeed—doing things somebody else's way. This will almost always end in failure.

True, but what I was asking, more or less, was if the temptation has literally been there.

Yeah, it has literally been around. Often. But if I think about it for, say, four seconds, a tour bus or a wall-size ad at the Virgin Megastore is not only not that great, but it's not really missing from my life. A tour bus would make touring like an office job and *anything* is better than that.

If you could single out one aspect of getting it done the long way—that is, of slowly building this following and maintaining it for over 10 years on your own terms as opposed to, I don't know, running off and playing with Billy Corgan—what would it be? What's been the most rewarding thing about this?

There is no single thing. It's everything.

Indulge me a bit and tell me why you said yes to this interview.

I agree to interviews for one of three reasons: 1) Because of tour press 2) In grati-

tude to Drag City 3) Because I think the interview will be somewhere between fun and interesting. In this case, it was a mix of the last two.

What made you, of all people, think this interview would be fun and interesting?

The source, and therefore context, was unlike the easily refutable ones. The interviews that make me sick ask about religion, family, alternative country music, name changes, the songwriting process—all questions I don't have the answers to. That's just people looking to me for the meanings of these songs. That's people looking to me for shit that is totally up to them. It also makes me sick to sit face to face and do these. With e-mail, I can get up, go away, come back, and skip questions without appearing difficult or rude.

I'm still not buying that you thought this would be fun.

This interview has concentrated on things that are a little easier to talk about. It feels more like a trade magazine interview than a personal exposé. If the person asking the questions has an open mind, then it's fun. Today I am a little grumpy, so this recent set of questions has been less fun. Last night's felt great. Basically, this *isn't* what I do. I make records and play shows. When I am asked to exert a certain amount of energy into an interview, it is deeply—and I mean like knee-jerk-core—upsetting.

Despite popular opinion, do you think people understand you?

What do you mean by "people"? In terms of understanding, it is most important that my family, my friends and my colleagues either understand or attempt to understand me—and I think those people in my life do one or the other. Thank god.

Then to the people who don't: If you could write an article on Will Oldham, what would it be about?

The thing is, I never would. ©

**IF I WASN'T MADE FOR DOING WHAT I DO,
I SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN MADE AT ALL.**



As you've gotten older, have you found yourself having to put aside some of your hardcore ideals?

I've never felt like I needed to grow up and get my life in order. There have been times where I've been disillusioned with the scene. But even though it is filled with pettiness and little gossipy kids, there is something optimistic going on. I am 33, have no health insurance or formal education, so what will I do when the gig is up? I don't know. There are definitely days where I think: "Dude, you are closer to 40 than you are 30 and you have no plan," but it's more fun for me to live from \$10 to \$10 than to get a corporate job and worry about mowing the lawn and making my wife happy.

You've been involved with hardcore for more than a decade, so where do you see the scene headed as it falls into the hands of a younger generation?

I ask myself that question a lot. I don't have that 16-year-old perspective anymore. There are a lot of bands I don't know playing big shows and selling records to this new breed of kids. I don't understand where hardcore is at, other than as a member of Bane. I'm disappointed with how fashion-conscious and trendy the scene has become—one band will get big with a certain sound and within three or four months a hundred bands are trying to sound like them. But honestly, I think it's always been like that.

Have you become more critical over the years?

Yeah. When I was a young kid and listening to Youth of Today and Gorilla Biscuits, the scene might not have been anymore original or courageous than it is now—I was just young and excited to be a part of it. I know we go to a lot of cities and a lot of kids still come out, so I guess that is the state of the hardcore scene right now.

Kids may still be going to shows, but a lot of people involved with hardcore since the beginning say it is dead, like Steven Blush, the author of *American Hardcore*. He argues that it will never reach the potential bands like Black Flag and Minor Threat reached, so why bother.

To a certain degree, he's right. What they were doing was so revolutionary and

unheard of, it was truly a movement that transcended the music—it was a whole attitude of taking on the world. You don't see that anymore in any scene. When Fear, Black Flag and the Circle Jerks were around, those dudes were bringing war. But you still can't tell me hardcore is dead. There are 300 kids here [he points to the entrance of the club] ready to have a good time listening to hardcore bands. As long as bands have a thing to say and feel a need to release it onstage, I think it's alive. But it's not going to be like it was in 1982.

It's like that with any form of music. Punk will never be the way it was when The Sex Pistols, The Damned and The Clash were around.

That's true. People could say rock is dead because bands don't rock like they did in the '70s and '60s. That book [*American Hardcore*] is a piece of shit. That guy is an opinionated, condescending prick. Something about his attitude rubbed me the wrong way. I think his writing detracted from documenting the scene. He was so arrogant I found myself wanting to argue with him instead of digging in.

Did you model your own ethics after your early experiences?

For me, it was Unbroken, this band from San Diego that brought a lot of emotion to the table and was not about being tough all the time. They were one of the first hardcore bands to bring in this raw, naked passion—this was before people were throwing the word "emo" around.

One of the first things I noticed when I started going to hardcore shows was the camaraderie between the bands and the crowd.

We are a hundred miles from our home right now, but we're connected here solely because of the music and central ideas. If you walk away from the scene and hang out at nightclubs, bars, or fraternities, you feel lost because there is no inner connection of creativity and expression.

Why do you think that is?

Hardcore is supposed to be a pure thing about passionate ideals, reality, and honesty. That is still what I cling to, even though there is bullshit pettiness. I meet kids at every show that really believe in it

Unlike many of his hardcore contemporaries, Bane vocalist Aaron Bedard steers clear of designer jeans and \$100 haircuts. Onstage at a matinee show in Syracuse, New York, he looks like Death without the scythe—a black hoodie shrouding his menacing stare and pock-marked skin. In between songs during the band's headlining set, he takes a moment to address a lively crowd about the war in Iraq.

"We can't sit here silent while our president blindly sends us to war," he shouts. "Once you begin to question everything around you, it's hard to live your daily life the same way anymore. It's important to open your eyes, but you won't like what you see."

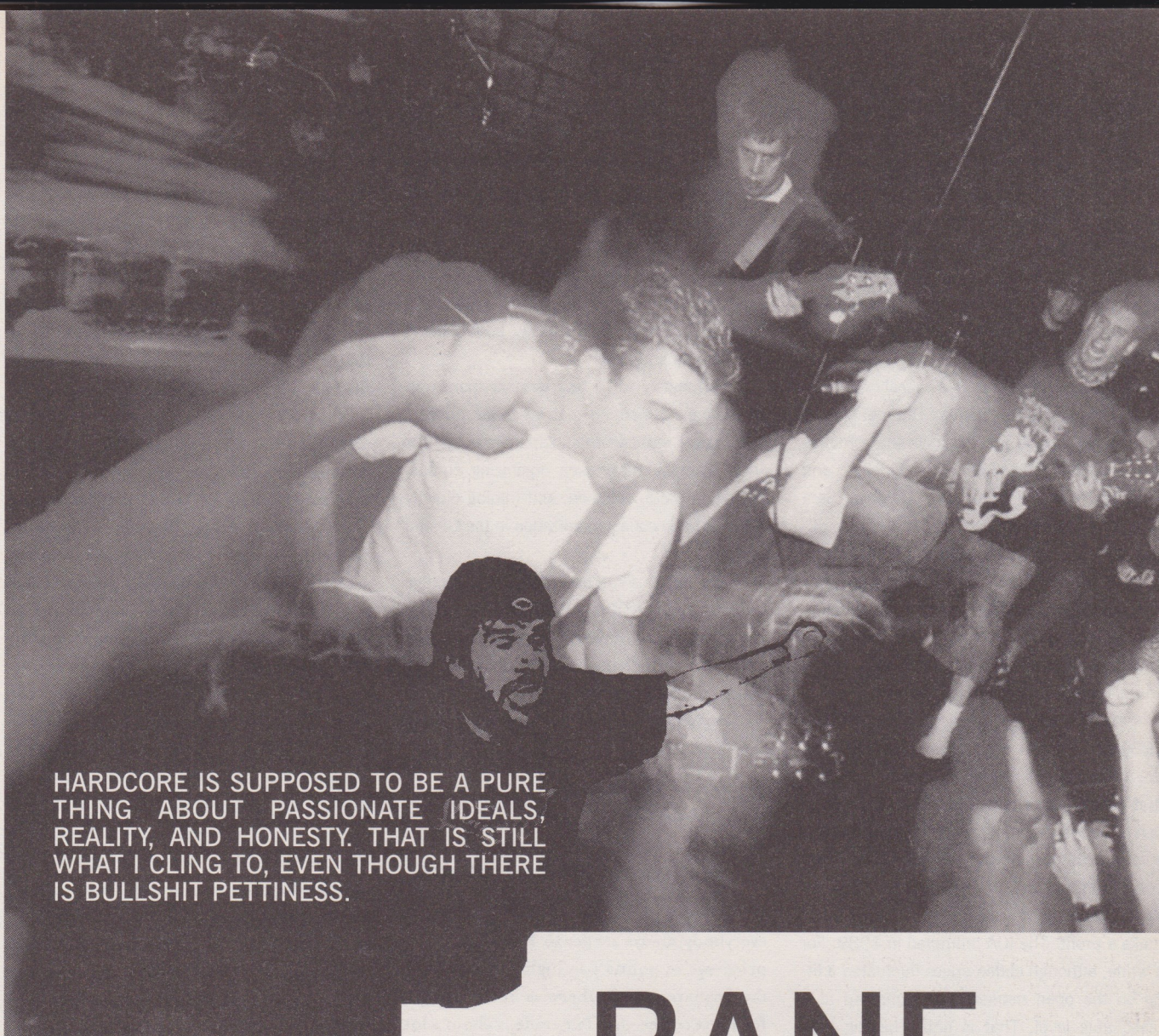
The band underscores his plea with a fervent rendition of "I Once Was Blind." Bedard darts across the crowded stage, trading places with guitarist Aaron Dalbec and nearly knocking over a stage diver.

Bane has brought Boston hardcore to purists since 1995. Cast from the Gorilla Biscuits/Minor Threat mold, the band favors volume and velocity over accessibility. Tight rhythms, grinding guitars and social commentary interlock on the band's two Equal Vision LPs, 1999's *It All Comes Down To This* and the refined follow-up *Give Up*. Brutish and raw, not a single track is tainted by a melodic breakdown or lovelorn lyric.

A fixture in the Boston scene since the '80s, the mild-mannered Bedard now finds himself an elder statesman of hardcore. With Bane's success after many years struggling, Bedard has plenty to say about the current state of the scene.

Interview by **Andrew Parks**

Photo by **Ricky Saporta**



HARDCORE IS SUPPOSED TO BE A PURE THING ABOUT PASSIONATE IDEALS, REALITY, AND HONESTY. THAT IS STILL WHAT I CLING TO, EVEN THOUGH THERE IS BULLSHIT PETTINESS.

BANE

and are here for the reasons I came into it. Punk and hardcore is a youth culture of radical minds and passionate people. There are kids *locked* into this, despite the fashion show kids prancing around.

Do you fault fashion-core bands for encouraging such behavior?

It's nauseating. Some of the bands kids look up to are so shallow and bring so little to the table. The bands I got into when I was a kid made me want to take on the world. Now you see these bands that have *nothing* to say onstage. You open up their CDs and they have *nothing* to say in their lyrics. They're just ultra-concerned with their clothes and their fancy dance moves. It drives me fucking crazy because

it is counter to everything I always believed this was about. And a lot of kids are buying into it—the Diesel jeans and \$100 shoes—instead of feeding their minds and challenging the world. So yeah, I think a lot of bands should be blamed for this because they are what a 15-year-old kid is going to look up to. Times are different. Before everything wasn't so quick and hip. Now, everything is ready made. You can go to a Hot Topic and walk out of the store a punk rocker in the eyes of the world.

With so much that's changed, what has kept you going this long? You've played together as

Bane for more than five years and still have to work day jobs when you aren't touring. What keeps you working at it?

We just love it. It's hard—there are days where you wish you could just be at home. Once a tour ends, you wonder if you could have even played one more show. But three weeks later, we can't wait to play again. It has nothing to do with popularity. I don't feel like this *needs* to be done because no one else is doing it—not at all. When it doesn't feel right anymore, someone in Bane will raise their hand and say they're done. And we will break up quietly. ☺

There's something rotten at the bottom of your favorite mug every morning. Don't check the expiration date on the cream—it still has a few more fresh days left. It's the corporate coffee trade that's turning your AM pick-me-up sour.

Today, the world's 25 million coffee farmers are in the throes of the worst coffee crisis in history. It began even before American cities broke out with a terrible case of Starbucks-Pox. In fact, Starbucks controls a measly one percent of the US coffee market. The real players in the coffee trade are the guys that produce the crap-coffee-in-a-can like Folgers and Maxwell House: Proctor and Gamble, Sara Lee, Kraft, and Nestle. These four multinational corporations, or the Big Four, control 80 percent of the US coffee market and 50 percent of the coffee market worldwide. They've been at it for a long time, but things have changed in the last five years, and the Big Four's profit margins continue to grow.

Here's the quick version: From 1963 to 1989, a Cold War era coffee cartel known as the International Coffee Agreement ensured that coffee prices remained at a "sustainable level." Sustainable implies that everyone involved, the farmer, the farming cooperative, corporations, and the conglomerates, all earned enough to support production and make a profit. The ICA crumbled in 1989. For a while, although coffee prices fluctuated a little on the open market, they remained at a reasonable level. That is until The Big Four decided they didn't want to pay \$2.40 per pound to the producers.

They went to their friends at the World Bank and encouraged them to pour money into what was then the diminutive Vietnamese coffee industry. The World Bank looked over at the ailing post-war Vietnam, where they saw a lot of cheap land, friendly government officials, and destitute people, and said, "Looks good to me."

The Vietnamese coffee industry spread like wild-fire. It is now second in the world behind Brazil. The Big Four have turned almost completely to Vietnam for their coffee beans—at 40 cents per pound who could resist? They moved all their business out of Africa and the Americas, where coffee has been the biggest—and sometimes only—cash crop since the end of colonial rule. As a result, coffee prices are at a hundred-year low. Farmers bring in roughly

30 percent of what they earned 11 years ago for their crop.

Coffee farmers there have done everything to stay afloat: most plunged into credit debt with parasitic lenders; some turned to other crops, like cocaine and "false banana," a plant used to sustain starving people in poor countries that contains no nutritional value, only starch and carbs. Needless to say, both markets are unstable and risky.

Fortunately for a few farmers there's an alternative—something that all coffee drinkers (this means you) can do to help them out of this crisis. Farmers have been organizing co-ops, bypassing the middlemen, and trading directly with fair trade coffee organization in the US and Europe.

Bill Harris is the president of Cooperative Coffees, a nonprofit fair trade coffee importer based in Americus, Georgia. He believes fair trade has the potential to transform relations between producing and consuming nations, and eventually revolutionize the way the world does business.

Interview by **Kate Sweeney**

Illustration by **Dan Grzeca**

Can you give me your definition of fair trade?

Well, the component of fair trade that everybody always seems to focus on is the price—we're gonna pay higher prices than the farmers would otherwise be able to get for their coffee—but fair trade is about a lot more than the price. It's about building a relationship with the producers. ¶ We're getting the coffee directly from them so they don't have to trade with intermediaries. When we start buying from a group of producers, we make a commitment and we're gonna continue to buy from 'em. We decide who we're gonna buy from, as an organization. Cooperative Coffees is made up of 14 roasters, and some of our roasters will send some of their staff members down on our annual trips to visit with the people who are growing our coffee. We sleep in their homes; get to know them as people and as our friends. We share knowledge that we might have of what they need to do to export their coffee directly to us. ¶ Also, the fair trade community is committed to further environmental efforts. All of our coffee is grown under shade, which has

become something of an issue in the coffee industry. Traditionally, coffee was grown under shade trees, but back in the '70s and '80s, there was a move to technify coffee: Cut down all the shade trees in Central America and put in these hybrid coffee plants that can withstand direct sun so that you can grow more coffee beans. Of course we're learning 20 years later that the topsoil washes away when you try to do that. Plus, coffee fields are traditionally similar to a wild forest in terms of migratory bird movement. We've seen a tremendous drop in the population of migratory birds because they're losing their resting spots. So, we encourage farmers to grow the coffee the original way. ¶ Most of Cooperative Coffee's coffee is organically grown. The issue in coffee with organics is not the consumer's health, like it would be in other organic foods, since the product is the bean, not the fruit. The issue concerning organic coffee is the *farmer's* health. If a coffee farmer is using chemicals, chances are the labels are written in English and most likely the farmer can't read that label. Now, they have to pay a lot of money for the chemicals, so the chemicals are very dear to 'em, so they store them in their home, behind the only locked door they have. So if you go to a farmer's home that is using chemicals to promote growth, you might find fertilizer, pesticides, and herbicides in the *same room* that the children are sleeping in.

You mentioned that, apart from paying them more, fair trade organizations help farmers to export their coffee. What's involved there and why might they have a difficult time doing that otherwise?

It's very difficult for a small farmers' group—who possibly doesn't have a telephone line or offices—to get permission from the government to export their own coffee. Different countries treat it different ways. In Mexico, with proper applications, they can usually get an export license. In Guatemala, almost all coffee has to be run through a small list of exporters, so it's virtually *impossible* to get an export license. In fact, when we buy coffee in Guatemala, we actually have to list someone else's name on the contract in order for the



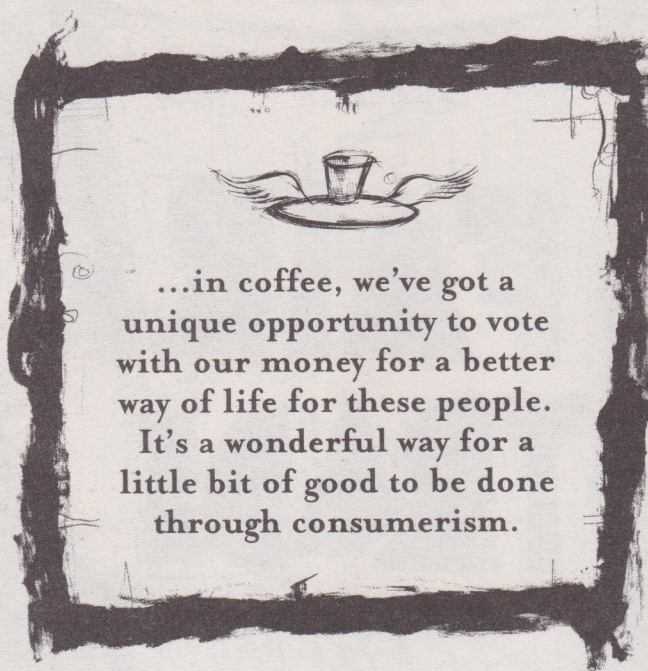
government to let it leave the country! This allows the government and the power coffee brokers in that country to maintain control. So, as an importer we have important knowledge. We try to point a farmers' group towards the right agents, the exporters that are fair and reasonable in that country.

Some specialty coffeeshops and roasters see a conflict between producing high-quality coffee and producing coffee that is labeled "fair trade", claiming that fair trade coffee usually comes from smaller farms that may lack the money for expensive quality. Do you think there is a difference between quality coffee and coffee that carries the fair trade label?

No. It's a myth that larger plantations have an infrastructure in place to produce quality coffee. What you often have is quite the opposite: their infrastructure exists to produce the *lowest* acceptable coffee. We feel our coffee is as good or better than any other coffee out there because the small farmers are like, "I'm simply gonna produce as good a coffee as I can. That's what I know how to do; I'm gonna do it the right way." A larger plantation might produce the minimum acceptable quality because they can afford to. ¶ At Cooperative Coffees, we send all the coffee that we import to an independent lab in Vermont called Coffee Lab International and they test what we call our "pre-shipment sample". We hear from this coffee lab that we are getting some of the best coffee out of these countries. *Everyone*, when they hear that, acts surprised. But why *wouldn't* we get the best coffee? If you were a farmer and you had the opportunity to deal directly with someone who would pay three to four times the price you can get from the local market, you'd want to make the relationship even stronger. We're paying the highest prices around, so if there was *any* customer you'd want to take care of, it'd be the fair-traders.

About what percentage of the coffee market now is fair trade?

In the States, the market is less than one-half of one percent. But it has become widely accepted in what we call the "specialty coffee" market—the big-chain coffee shops and independent cafés—that represents about 20 percent of the overall coffee sales in the States. So, statistically, there's plenty of room for fair trade to grow. Seventy percent of the world's coffee is grown by small family farms that are on less than 10 acres of land and don't have employees; it's just a family that lives on the land and grows coffee. Any of them could organize. Any of those towns and villages could organize and export their coffee directly if there was a demand for fair trade on our end. We estimate in the



fair trade movement that about 10 percent of the coffee that is currently grown is grown by producer groups that are organized and involved in fair trade. So that means the 90 percent of the coffee that they're selling, they're still selling the old way. They've organized themselves, they've started selling directly, but most of their volume still goes out the old way. There's ample supply, we just need consumer demand.

So how do we get that demand? Why should the average coffee drinker care?

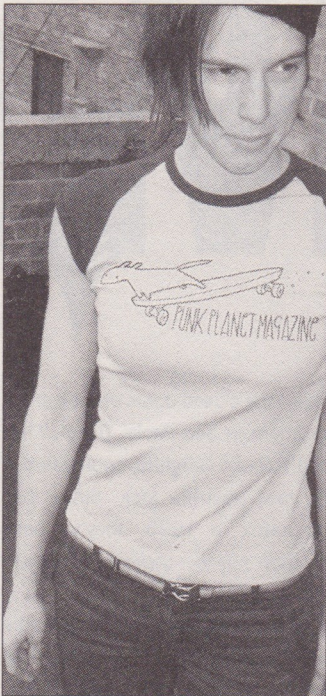
If you look over there at that map of where coffee's grown, you will see that consistently it is coming from some of the poorest countries in the world. Why? Because coffee is the most labor-intensive agricultural crop that exists—it's gotta be hand-picked, one bean at a time. There are 2,000 beans in one pound of coffee, so for you to get a cup of coffee, someone has to reach up to that tree and pluck 2,000 individual beans and carry them down the mountain. Then a lot of the processing that takes place from there is by hand. So why should the average person support fair trade and particularly fair trade coffee? Because in coffee, we've got a unique opportunity to vote with our money for a better way of life for these people.

It's a wonderful way for a little bit of good to be done through consumerism. There are so many consumer products these days that are produced in some of the poorest countries in the world and they don't necessarily bring anything good to that country except for pollution, jobs that don't pay well at all, false hopes, and overcrowded cities. Coffee is giving people that are traditionally agriculturists a way to stay on their land. The system's simple: We're able to put someone sitting in a coffee shop on Saturday morning, reading the newspaper in *direct* touch with the people that grew that coffee. ¶ None of us know

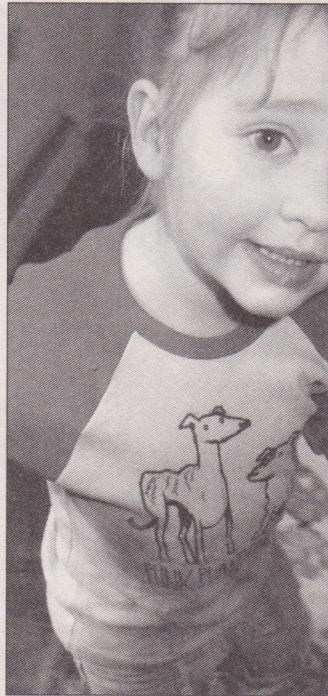
where our shoes are made; we don't know where our T-shirts are made—we only hear horror stories. These are other products that could exist in a fair trade market. You could literally connect the producers to the consumers and you'd have a better world because of it. And so to me, coffee is an model for a system that could be put in place for a variety of consumer products. If we can make coffee work, maybe we can do it with other things too. And sometime in the future maybe we can have a world where international trade actually does good instead of cause harm. ☺

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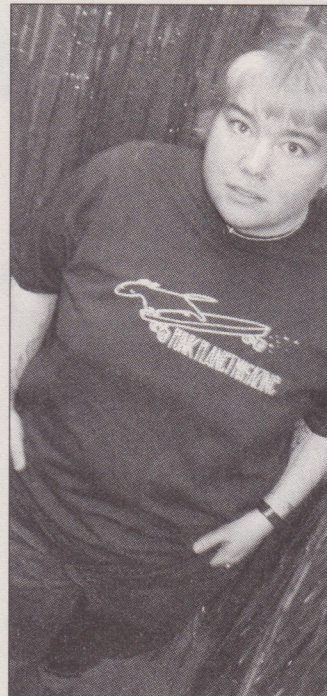
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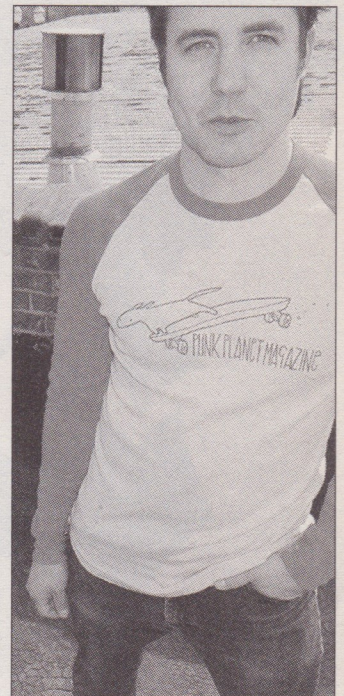
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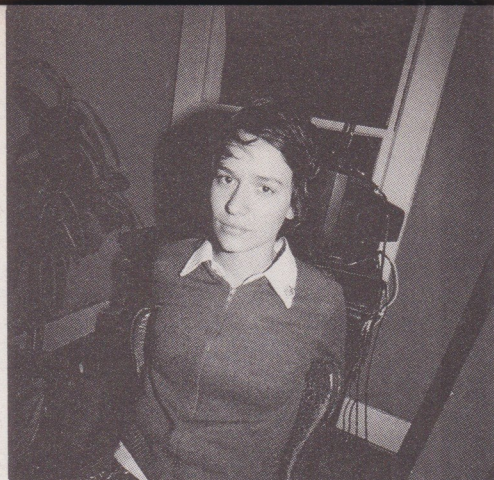


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GIRL

Behind the closed doors of their small bedroom in Sao Paolo, Brazil, Elisa and Isabella Gargiulo, spun years of defiance into raw, guerrilla rock. Since they founded Dominatrix in 1995, they've been making more than music—they've been making *history*.

During the sexual revolution, women in the US gained rights, established rhetorical tools, and opened opportunities to fight sexist oppression. Today, feminism is still an integral part of the ongoing civil rights movement. Brazil's history is very different and the country's culture is still prohibitively conservative and patriarchal. The only feminists the young Elisa and Isabella had heard of were middle-aged, heterosexual women who didn't make waves.

Growing up in Brazil in the 90s, the sisters had to re-invent feminism for themselves. Rebelling was risky, but they took the chance and the response was epic. When Dominatrix unleashed *Girl Gathering* in 1997 it was like a damn broke and a torrent of queer and feminist bands, zines, and collectives flooded the Brazilian punk scene.

Dominatrix has had a lot to contend with: the explosive success, the backlash, the rumors and the drama; it's amazing that they're still a



WE HAD FEMINIST LYRICS ON



DOMINATRIX

band. They just released their third full-length on guitarist/vocalist Elisa's Chlorine Records, titled *Self Delight* and have completed their first US tour, which was instigated and sponsored by Portland punk duo The Haggard.

While America's musical landscape feels increasingly chauvinistic, Dominatrix is a reminder that pure will can beat the odds, and that determination born of hope creates scene unity. Oh, yeah . . . and they totally rock.

Interview by **Julianne Shepherd**

Photos by **Jen Davison**

How did you first become a band?

Isabella Gargiulo: When my sister Elisa was 12, she got her first guitar. When she was 14, she started looking for people to form an all-girl band with; since she couldn't find anybody, she started playing with me! In 1995, we found a drummer; it was hard work 'cause we had no friends in the punk community at all, except this boy we knew who studied at this music school. He heard this girl drummer was going to perform there, so we went to see her play with all these senior teachers. She played the drums really well! We got so excited, 'cause she

knew punk bands like L7 and the Dead Kennedys. That was December of 1995. We played our first show in March, 1996.

When you released *Girl Gathering*, were you prepared for the impact it would make?

Isabella: When we released that CD, it was the first time a feminist band was actually speaking out. We had feminist lyrics on that album without knowing they were feminist lyrics, they are almost naïve . . .

Elisa Gargiulo: I could make a comparison with a band like Bikini Kill; on their first record, the lyrics were so direct, and that way you can communicate really fast. I think because we had those kinds of lyrics, it really *was* about girls gathering together, because it was so easy to understand.

Isabella: I don't know if we would have had the courage to be so direct if we had been in the scene for a long time, but we created the band inside a bedroom with no contact with the world at all. We really thought that it was correct to say those things, 'cause we didn't know anybody anyway! ¶ We so wanted to see girls in the scene, 'cause as teenagers, we had this fan-

THAT ALBUM WITHOUT KNOWING THEY WERE FEMINIST

tasy world. We were so isolated inside our house that we thought the scene in our city was full of girl bands! We imagined there would be girl festivals and—once we could go out of the house—we would meet up with those women and it would be awesome. But the truth was that *nobody* was playing; there were no women at all, ever!

¶ After we put out that record, there were so many girls coming to the shows. Suddenly the scene was filled with girls doing all kinds of things: bands, fanzines, collectives, performance artists, painters. It was really amazing. I don't know if it was because of us, but I think the sexism was such that the girls were so fed up. When a feminist band finally appeared, they were like, "Yeah!" They were just vomiting years and years of sexism.

Were you influenced by American bands at that time?

Isabella: Yes. There were no such bands in Brazil; there was no way we could've done that without the influence of British and American feminist music, like The Runaways, Joan Jett, and The Slits.

How did you discover those bands?

Elisa: Mostly by the television at first. Then the radio.

Isabella: Fifty percent of the punks I know saw their first punk rock band playing on television. They came from families like ours; in Brazil the families are very centered and overprotective—and you don't leave your house until you're 35.

Elisa: And that's not just economics; it's a really dangerous country.

Isabella: You basically stay in your house, and the way you get in touch with punk rock is through TV and radio. That's why I'm not against TV; in Brazil, what else do we have? You can't just go out in the streets and do crazy stuff because it's not part of the culture—unless you're playing music that the people like. If you think about teenagers growing up in a very conservative and overprotective family, and they turn on the television and see something like Green Day, or Hole . . . In a poor country, there aren't people doing cool stuff on the streets. You have to take a bus or you can't

go out, so you have to do everything inside your house. And when you turn on the television and see alternative rock, it's just amazing! I don't deny my past because I saw bands on television. I think it's good that I could break free from that. But that sort of television punk gave me the capacity to break free from television.

Elisa: At the beginning of the band, we gave a lot of interviews to a lot of big newspapers. Whenever anyone wanted an interview, we would give it because we didn't have this punk mentality of "No, I'm going to be a sellout." At that time, we didn't have big zines where we could communicate, so the only thing to do was give interviews in big journals.

Isabella: The big magazines get to the middle of the jungle, and zines don't. So as long as we keep getting letters from the middle of the jungle, from a tiny, three-person town in the Amazon, from some girl saying, "Feminism saved my life, thank you," we will keep doing it.

Is it hard to set up shows in Sao Paulo or around Brazil that younger kids can come to? You play in clubs, right? What are they like? Is that economically possible for kids to open and run a DIY space?

Isabella: It's really hard, DIY-wise. I think we should have more DIY places. Punk

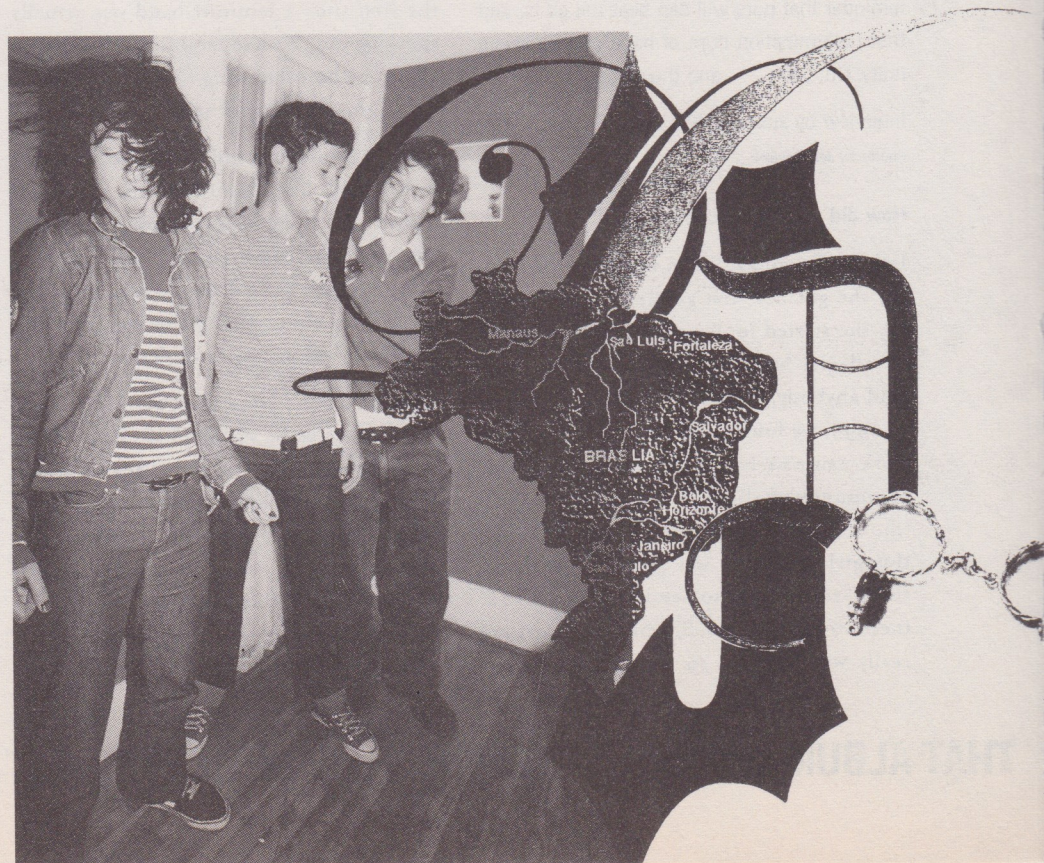
clubs usually have a very short life; if they survive for more than five years, it's like, wow. Either they become more heavy metal-oriented—where people drink more—or cover bands, or they become samba clubs so more people will attend, because samba is the national music. We have some small clubs to play; in Sao Paulo we have a big place which bands play now, but because we have to give the guy so much money, the door is expensive sometimes. I think mostly we need a DIY place.

Elisa: At state centers you can make a free show, but you have to be a registered musician, so you have to pay 100 *real* per year to get the musician ID. It's so fucked up.

What about your new president [Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, a socialist, pro-choice, pro-feminist, pro-queer liberal elected by the largest majority in Brazil's democratic history]? How has living there and being a feminist in Brazil changed?

Isabella: Nothing much has changed in Brazil so far, because it's still in a transitional phase. Of course we have hope, because there were so many years of right-wing government, and finally, there's a *super* leftist guy.

Elisa: He's not actually a super, *super* leftist guy. I think he may have good intentions, but since we're living during globalization,



governments don't rule as much as enterprises and corporations. I have hope, because I want everyone in Brazil to have food and money and health insurance, but I'm really aware that it's going to be difficult for him to do it. We have all these American and European interests in South America and we have this huge hunger and huge economic crisis. I don't know if he's that leftist, but I feel the good intention. He supports the feminist movement a lot and that's good. Let's see what happens.

Have you seen how he's trying to manifest his ideals? Has it affected you?

Isabella: There are more woman participating in the parliament and the senate—almost twice as many as before, so this is one good sign that he is pro-woman, I suppose. In his speeches, he has a clear stance on being pro-gay and pro-choice. But so far we can't see any results from that in real life, 'cause it's only been three months.

Is it true that fundamentalists and Pentecostals are very powerful in Brazil?

Elisa: Yes, they have a lot of money. I even saw a Brazilian church in Los Angeles: it's called *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* [Universal Church of the Kingdom of God].

Isabella: It was founded by these two Brazilian priests/moneymakers. When we come here and see it, it's scary—it's a multinational church. Our companies hardly ever come to the US, but the churches do. That means they really have a lot of money and success. And if they have success, it means there are a lot of people involved. In Brazil, their motto is "There is a way out."

So this means to all the poor people: "You should not despair, there is a way in Jesus Christ." Everybody comes to their churches—they are huge, super-fancy temples with high-tech equipment. Of course they're in awe, with the guy saying, "There is a way out!" It's like they're hypnotized.

Elisa: They are a mixture of Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian religions. They have some sessions where they put the demon out of peoples' bodies. I think it's interesting because it's really post-modern; it's a media religion, it's emotional, and it's got all these mixed symbols—no one knows what they mean, but they are beautiful and big. ¶ We have this other religious movement called *carismaticos* [Charismatic Catholicism]. Padre Marcelo Rossi is the main guy who appears on television on the biggest channel. Every Sunday, around six AM, he has a service for the whole country, and you have to hold a glass of water in front of the television for him to bless it! It's really important to think of all those religions as something that came out of the television generation, because they're so spectacular, with really simple speeches.

Isabella: And a lot of singing, so everyone can feel better. Everybody hugs and makes friends in a hugging session.

Elisa: Because people don't have money, they suffer a lot; it's a very poor country.

Isabella: There's no leisure, so they go to one place where they can talk, make new friends, sing, pray, and be told that there is a way out.

Elisa: I'm really respectful of others' spirituality, but only as long as you don't get

money from people, or if they're not oppressing women. I don't think the old punk phrases, like "Fuck the church," or "Fuck god" are correct, because you have to respect each others' spirituality. But I think we have to be really aware of their oppression tools and their money.

Isabella: As long as your spirituality doesn't get to the state and fuck up my rights, it's fine, do whatever you want.

Has religion gotten to the state, then?

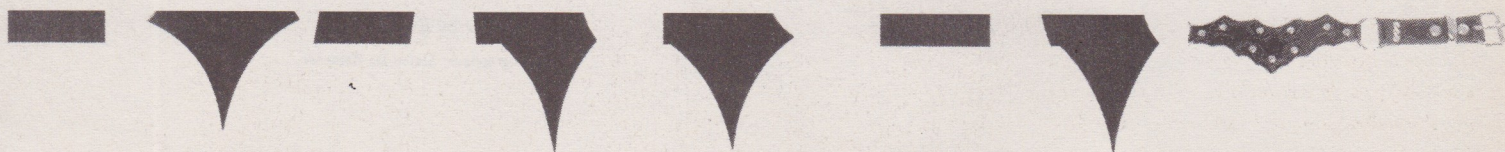
Elisa: Yes. They have a huge number of representatives in parliament. They banned abortion—abortion is legal for raped women, but it's not regular in state hospitals. But because it's by voting, this whole table of *Evangelicos* made this huge national campaign against it.

Legal abortion ended? They were successful?

Isabella: Yeah, now it's illegal. Also, there was a push to make gay marriage legal, but because of the religious people in the government, it never happened. As much as there is a leftist government, if you have all these religious people voting in the Senate, how are you going to achieve radical goals? The leftist government, in a way, is just a symbol.

Elisa: Our population is so uneducated about modern issues and because of the economic crisis, they view gay marriage and abortion as some kind of chaotic situation. They relate it to the economic crisis; they think it's all in the same chaos package. Because people are uneducated and alarmed by those issues, it's really hard to conquer those civil rights. ☺

AS LONG AS WE KEEP GETTING LETTERS FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE JUNGLE, FROM A TINY, THREE-PERSON TOWN IN THE AMAZON, FROM SOME GIRL SAYING, "FEMINISM SAVED MY LIFE, THANK YOU," WE WILL KEEP DOING IT





When Colin Newman and Bruce Gilbert of Wire walk downstairs into the basement of my Brighton house—stopping to admire the view across Preston Park along the way, several thoughts collide in my brain space.

A few weeks earlier, Newman sent me an aggrieved e-mail in response to a (favourable) article run in our magazine, *Careless Talk Costs Lives*, about his band. Members' names were incorrectly credited: a source of irritation to the original '76 punk band with three cycles, three separate lives spanning 25 years and credited with inspiring entire canons of music (most particularly Tortoise, Stereolab, Blur, and new wave). Several months earlier, Newman had been equally aggressive in questioning *CTCL*'s haphazard review policy—his label Swim (which seeks to keep the flag of dissident electronica and old school art-punk alive) had taken out their first ever print advertisement for our magazine's sophomore issue, inspired by our hasty rhetoric. He could not understand why this financial commitment did not translate into review space (not as dirty as it sounds—unless Newman had missed his mark badly, which he didn't).

Jostling for space with these thoughts was the memory of some riotous, ridiculous sleeve notes I wrote for *Wire Play Pop*, an early '80s reissue of Wire material on English cutie label Pink (home to a pre-Stereolab McCarthy, and South London's June Brides) wherein I tried to mask my lack of knowledge of all music Wire with lavish use of the! exclamation! mark! Shortly before penning said plaudits, I'd heard Wire's jagged, extraordinary filmic tribute "I Am The Fly" on a mix tape in a friend's car and . . . Imagine! How! !! Felt!

"What is this? WHAT IS THIS?" I screamed, aghast that such "perfect" pop could have previously escaped me. "I Am The Fly" was as pop, '60s, and startling bubblegum glee as the Ramones.

Sure, I loved the third album, *154*—the one with that song about the horse struggling to break free of a barbed wire fence as the narrator passed helplessly by on a train; the one with map references and glistening layers of keyboard; the one that helped change my entire perception of punk music. Listening back to it now, it's astonishing to realise how of its time it was, because then it sounded revolutionary: Joy Division borrowed the guitar sound from "A Touching Display"; arch New Romantics Visage lifted some of their vocal stylings from "A Mutual Friend"; a whole slew of post-Roxy Music and post-Pink Floyd punk bands gratefully took inspiration from the sheen of modernity: even synthesiser is spelt with an "s". Odd that their live shows were so famously chaotic and full-throttle back in 1979, then.

Backtrack slightly, and catch the remark about not being qualified: when *Punk Planet* commissioned me to write a 5,000 word story on Wire, their importance to both post-rock and punk, their relevance to the present day and . . . damn it . . . balloons, I again felt like a charlatan, the shifty fox with a silver tongue. I have been known to move continents to avoid the reformation of former idols.

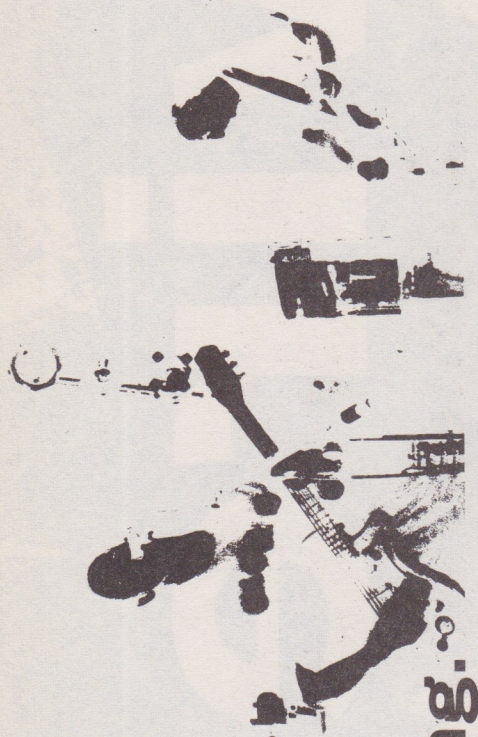
All these thoughts, and more, crowd into my head, when Newman and Gilbert show up: they are two genial middle-aged gentlemen—yes please, they *would* appreciate biscuits on a plate and a cup of tea, certainly. It's only when Newman (in particular) starts talking in his distinctive voice that he is betrayed by his passion, his sense of increased urgency.

Interview by **Everett True**

Photographs by **Stefan De Batselier**

W.I.R.E.





WIRE IS A CYCLICAL THING. IT HAPPENS
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YOU ARE IN THE CYCLE YOU'LL HAVE A DIFF-
ERENT THEORY ABOUT WHY IT DOES WHAT
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wire is a cyclical thing.

Why Wire, now?

Colin Newman: Wire is a cyclical thing. It happens sometimes, and depending on where you are in the cycle you'll have a different theory about why it does what it does and why it doesn't do what it doesn't do. Usually it stops operating because there are reasons for *not* doing it—that's a good position to be in. ¶ Bruce and I have been in and around various scenes in London. Although we didn't have a formal working relationship with Wire at the time, we'd often find that we were at the same kind of events—we knew a similar grouping of people and we knew how we felt about culture. But there was no reason to do Wire during that period. It wouldn't have made any sense. ¶ Towards the end of the '90s, it started to make sense again. Electronic music had its day' drum and bass was more or less done and dusted by '97; and you had all the post-rocky things coming up, like Tortoise. The world could only have so much slowness. Somehow, it seemed that standing on a stage making a noise with guitars wasn't a stupid thing to be doing. It wasn't a backward step.

So for you, Wire remains a necessity?

Bruce Gilbert: In the end, it's about embarrassment or non-embarrassment. You have to feel that what you're doing essentially fits in either with what *should* be happening or *isn't* happening.

There's a marked contrast between what Wire is doing now, and what it did in the '80s. It appears to be a remarkable synthesis of the history of styles you've worked in, but at the same time it's also very much a reflective return to your earliest work.

Colin: For the '80s version of Wire we started with a genius concept: "OK, we'll dismiss everything we've done in the past and start at year zero." It started well, but it was too hard to do. It was a great idea, but . . .

Bruce: . . . it was not transparent enough.

Colin: It was too complex in the execution. So for this third version of Wire we said, "OK, let's do 180 degrees from that. Let's look at our own history . . ."

Bruce: . . . and not be embarrassed by it!

Colin: And not say, "That was stuff that happened in the past and nobody's interested in it anymore." It just so happened that the cultural context was coming around—suddenly people were *very* interested in stuff that was produced during a particular period in the '70s. So we wrote down everything we could possibly imagine we could play, and played everything . . .

Bruce: . . . that was achievable. It became obvious that our musicianship hadn't improved.

Colin: What Wire is very good at doing is following a scheme: "We do this 10 times, and then we do that." As long as the instructions are simple, you don't need to rehearse, almost. ¶ I had this idea about covering *Pink Flag*, taking out all the bits we don't like, the very '70s bits. There's one chord change in it that sounded splendidly wrong in 1977, but sounds anachronistic now.

That's what's so nice about the new material. It doesn't sound the least bit retro.

Colin: Wire is the most useless band in the world when it comes to reproducing an album. We wouldn't know how to start. There's got to be a motivation for standing up on stage and playing something. If you can't convince yourself, you're not going to convince anybody else.

You may, if you've followed the career of Wire closely, wondered precisely where their second reincarnation—which occurred somewhere in the middle of the '80s and was based 'round new sampling technology: "Eardrum Buzz", "Snakedrill" and all that—fits in with their rediscovered blueprint, the master plan. It's simple: Wire has always been seduced, sometimes overwhelmingly so, by new technology. 1987's *The Ideal Copy*, in particular, finalized the change from analog to digital the band had begun over a decade earlier. Wire proved that it was possible to match punk attitude to studio craftsmanship.

This is why the English quartet are held as such major influences in 2003 by American counter-cultural bands from post-rock Chicago to neo-wave Brooklyn and back again. Plus, of course, the melodies and hook lines: for, as The Fall's Mark E. Smith once memorably ranted, you should always remember the "three r's": repetition, repetition, repetition.

Wire once considered themselves a punk band, playing fast aggressive music, using guitars; they never felt they had a place within a culture that denied the use of either. So they needed to bide their time until the context existed again.

I tell the two musicians that I myself played two shows recently, the first time I'd performed in England as an "artist" for 15 years.

My wife was watching, and she didn't know me 15 years ago. Afterwards, she said, "You're just re-enacting a memory of yourself, of someone I've never known. I didn't like it at all."

I put her statement to Newman and Gilbert, the reformed punk musicians.

"You're just re-enacting a memory of yourself"—there must have been an element of that with Wire in 2000.

Bruce: There was a fear of that.

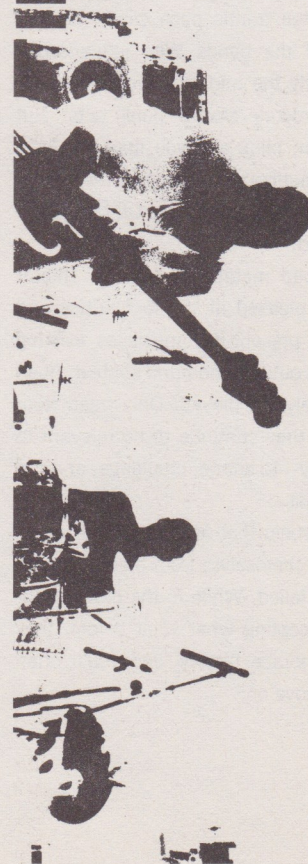
Colin: What was interesting was the way the new material came about. In 1999, we got offered to the chance to do something at the Royal Festival Hall [in London], but we didn't do it until 2000. We decided to not just do a Wire gig. We curated a whole evening of stuff: put together a video projection, all that kind of stuff. We had *no idea* if Wire themselves could be entirely convincing. That's not false modesty. There are no guarantees in this. That show—considering what it was, what *we* were—was OK.

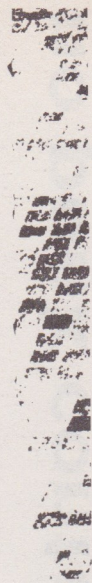
¶ After that, we were asked to do the All Tomorrow's Parties festival in April 2000, which Mogwai curated. That was an entirely different concept, playing to people who are into contemporary . . . whatever you might call it: music, rock, fragmented dance—all that mellow stuff. Our fellow acts were the spiritual sons and daughters of Mogwai playing very, very slow music. Among the things we played, we did some pretty fast songs. It sounds absurd, but I just knew there were elements in the audience that were freaked out by it. Suddenly, there were these old blokes totally in your face and shouting! ¶ Five years before, it would have been perceived as punk rock revivalism, even though Wire was a *rubbish* punk band. But we had that kind of loud, driving energy on stage at All Tomorrow's Parties that we knew was being perceived in an entirely different way. Immediately after that it was obvious there had to be more material and it had to be *fast*.

Bruce: I never saw it as catering to the coming tendency. It just seemed that the physicality and the speed of delivery made complete sense. I had this very strong feeling, and it was quite pleasing to me, that, as Colin said, what we were playing was being perceived completely outside any of the punk context. It purely happened as fast music. No punk context at all.

no punk context at all

WHAT WE WERE PLAYING WAS BEING PERCEIVED COMPLETELY OUTSIDE ANY OF THE PUNK CONTEXT. IT PURELY HAPPENED AS FAST MUSIC. NO PUNK CONTEXT AT ALL.





Was there much label interest in Wire's new work?

Colin: There weren't a whole bunch of record companies waiting for us after we played all those shows, so we opened our own corner shop. We recorded our very first rehearsals and the Royal Festival Hall show and we made some CDs and sold them at shows and through mailorder. Pink Flag, as a label, happened through that. It became increasingly obvious that was the only way forward for us was to release our own CDs. With a conventional record company, the amount of money someone would have to stump up to equal what we could do on a very modest scale doesn't add up."

Bruce: Also, if we're viewing this project as something that is entirely up to us, then you can't engage with a record company anymore. In the old days they thought they had a band, but they didn't. The beauty of having our own label—of having an outlet under our control—is that we don't have to be a band. It's not a career thing—it's an activity that we do.

Colin: The level of intelligence—the thinking and planning that goes into what we actually do—is at such a higher level than ever before. As soon as you see the sentence "Band making album," there's a huge big pressure on the band.

Bruce: It's boring.

Colin: Yeah, let's not be doing that—let's be doing something else. We decided to do a series of six track EPs and curate them ourselves. If we'd have gone to any record company, even a friendly one, and said, "What we want to do is a six track EP," they'd have gone, "No, you have to do an album." And as for the argument, "But how can we go straight from a standing start to an album that anybody would be interested in," they would've replied, "You have to spend a lot of money promoting it." So we'd have started with this massive great debt that would've taken us the next five years to pay off. That's not a brilliant way of doing anything. ¶ So we put out the *Read And Burn 1* EP ourselves. There was no great plan, we just said, "OK. Here, we've got this, we've made them, do you want to sell them?" And off they went. Then some-

thing that nobody planned for happened: They started *selling*. Our UK press promotion mail-out consisted of 44 copies. I remember the exact number. And we had an amazing comeback on that.

It's clear you struck some kind of nerve.

Colin: It so happened that it seemed to resonate with something else that was going on, especially in America. There is a generation of American bands who cite Wire as an influence. The weirdest thing that happened was we toured again last year, in September, and we had a record in the Top 10 on college radio. There are things that happen because of moments in time. We're extremely lucky to be able to be in that position to actually do the things we want.

Bruce: It's not a comeback because we were never here.

Earlier, you said you don't consider yourselves part of punk, but Wire is central to my entire concept of punk.

Bruce: I always thought punk was experimental music.

Colin: Absolutely. The roots of Wire were not in the UK. The Sex Pistols were the most exciting and important band in 1976. They were hugely entertaining, they were very funny, and they sorted out the men from the boys—you were either with them or against them. It was very simple. Then it turned into something less appealing. The trouble with The Ramones is that although the idea of making the same record 20 times over is very interesting conceptually, in practice it's . . .

I think the Ramones were a very misunderstood band.

Colin: Before I ever knew Bruce, before I ever was in Wire, I liked the Ramones. From the first time I heard the Ramones I knew exactly what they were about. They were a collision between a garage rock aesthetic and '60s bubblegum—they reduced everything to an absolute minimum, and all the songs sounded the same. Fantastic! The American groups were much more adventurous. I remember the night when Patti Smith and The Ramones played at The Roundhouse. *That* was the birth of UK punk. All the US groups were coming from

Hence *Send*, Wire's first full-length album for 12 years and 26 years on from *Pink Flag*. I guess it's only ironic that its pristine vitriol, its snapping machine-punk anger, distorted vocals, and often frantic pace can't help but recall some of the bands Wire influenced—most particularly the mid-'80s crop of play-it-again-Sam hardcore electro punk acts. But even past them, blink and you may see Atari Teenage Riot mutinously shifting in the decaying half-light or Laika and Mouse On Mars looking on surprised.

Enough bad metaphors already: Gilbert is right to be pleased at the fact critics and fans see their present-day music as existing almost entirely outside the punk context, however aggressively it's played. Only freed from their past can they continue to be relevant to the present-day—to shape, challenge, and tap into the zeitgeist.

It's also ironic that as hard as the group tried to divorce themselves from their history in the '80s, they failed. While in the new millennium, after accepting what went before, they succeeded. Embrace history, and you'll often find you can move on.

a very arty edge: Patti Smith was poetry; the Ramones played songs with one chord. If we related to anything, we related to that.

Was it coincidence that Wire arrived at the time of punk?

Bruce: It's tricky. It's the context, isn't it? You have to have the context before you can do it.

Colin: The world and its wife wanted to be the Sex Pistols and we didn't want to do that. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that if there's X number of Sex Pistols out there, none of them are going to get anywhere, even if they're any good. Just how many people that ended up doing completely different kinds of music were in post-Sex Pistols punk bands that didn't get anywhere? ¶ Wire had its own particular cycle that it had to go through. We had all our influences, but the attitude didn't arrive until punk. I had only ever written acoustic guitar songs before—after punk I said, "It's no good writing those, they're rubbish." The first idea was it should be really easy to play, and then how short we could get it. They were very basic concepts. When I hear people who did that after Wire I hear too much of their thinking in it. I don't think that *Pink Flag*, as an album, feels that conceptual.

No it doesn't. I guess the difference between *Pink Flag*-era Wire or early Ramones and most other groups was that although you knew they were concepts, they don't feel that way.

Colin: It makes sense. After all, if you have something that only lasts for 30 seconds, it's not going to be, "Oh yeah, here's the concept." Also, we were the first generation able to look at the history of popular music with a certain kind of criticality. You knew that the people that you liked when you were younger did two albums and then got crap. In the '60s bands changed from being mods to hippies and it was perfectly acceptable. By the mid-to-late '70s, audiences became increasingly sophisticated. We couldn't get away with those very basic concepts.

When the first rumblings of a major Wire revival in the mid-'90s came from out-and-out pop bands like Blur, it must have been gratifying.

Colin: No, it was really annoying. During the mid-'90s, drum and bass is what was happening. Britpop? That was the major label, mainstream music. I felt personally embarrassed to be associated with it.

I found it amusingly ironic. Of all the places for appreciation to come from, it came from Blur!

Colin: It was when it got to Menswear that it got deeply weird. Of course someone can say that Wire is basically someone going [makes silly voice] "Oh Uh Oh", but all the groups used to do that. I never imagined that vocal styling would come back, because it was so terribly arch, but it's all over *everything* now.

It's like I'm hearing the same Punishment Of Luxury record time and time again.

Colin: I don't want to be hearing too much about Punishment Of Luxury, thank you. I'm just living in mortal dread of the Goth revival right now.

What about current bands you like?

Colin: In 2001, there were some bands coming up who were quite interesting that had their roots in the late '70s and early '80s. But now I'm just so fucking bored of that sound. One good band is The Liars. Erase Errata is interesting, too. But by the time you're out to Radio 4 . . . I'm sorry.

You're coming from exactly the same place as me.

Colin: It pains me slightly as a human being to say this, but . . . *Interpol*? They're dull as ditchwater. They played a show after ours in Austin. It was billed as the "Wire After Party," so we went there. The drummer for Interpol came up to me—it was one of those magic moments you almost pray for—and says, "I want to shake your hand: *Read And Burn 1*, fucking amazing." He's not saying, "Yeah, *Pink Flag*," he's saying, "*Read And Burn 1*"—it had just come out! [laughs] I did try quite hard to get into them, and I just couldn't. It's Joy Division.

Bruce: It's too mannered.

Colin: It's totally mannered. It's Joy Division; it's The Smiths. I've become quite disillusioned.

POP MUSIC IS ALWAYS KNOWING, QUOTING FROM OTHER STUFF—AND THAT'S WHAT WIRE IS DOING NOW: INTERACTING POSITIVELY WITH ITS OWN CULTURE.



I get the sense that what others are doing isn't influencing what you're doing. So what is?

Colin: Fundamentally, our expectation of what we think we can achieve in a day has gone massively up. I can remember if I could just about manage to eat my breakfast, get to the park, get to the bank and pay a couple of bills . . . bloody hell, I'd be well exhausted by that! Everybody's personal expectations about what they think they're going to get done in a day has gone up because we have computers that enable us to do more things more quickly and our workload has increased exponentially. ¶ Somebody a couple of weeks ago said they would be interested to know what type of books I read and I felt so bad to admit that I don't have the time to read books anymore. I wish I did. I wish I had time to just sit down and read something. And it's the same position for everybody else—we're all in that position, so brevity is a good idea. We're not just sitting around going, "Hey, relax, laugh through it . . ." Pop music is always knowing, quoting from other stuff—and that's what Wire is doing now: interacting positively with its own culture. ©

Thanks to Richard Stacey for transcribing this interview.

It's a lot easier to meet an exciting person in the music business than it is to meet a nice one. And that's fine, particularly in the world of independent music, where personalities take a backseat to the mode of production. When someone is more interested in making music than making a profit, you're willing to cut them a lot of slack. But with Scott Kannberg, you don't need to. Although he was a founding member of Pavement, one of the past decade's most influential and successful independent bands, Kannberg is startlingly free of rock star pretense.

I have the privilege of seeing shows in Tucson, Arizona, where the small confines force performers to mingle with the crowd. It's a hell of a lot easier to chat up your favorite musician than in San Francisco, Los Angeles, or New York. Even so, most artists project enough reluctance to ward off extended conversation. But when Scott Kannberg brought his new band, Preston School of Industry, through town last summer, he seemed so relaxed that people couldn't believe he was the main attraction. He sat at the bar, talking leisurely with longtime fans and newcomers alike. Although his lyrics reflect a keen intellect, Kannberg seemed to have no interest in showing off.

You can't help but wonder whether being Mr. Nice Guy might hurt Kannberg's career. When Dinosaur Jr's Lou Barlow was trying to escape J Mascis's shadow, he seemed to be locked in a perverse competition with his former bandmate for the Asshole-of-the-Year award. But it got him noticed, and now Barlow is bigger than his onetime partner. Kannberg, by contrast, goes out of his way not to say negative things about Pavement's other leading light Stephen Malkmus. It's clear that Kannberg wishes that the break-up had been less emotionally taxing, but at the same time, you get the sense that he doesn't want to burn any bridges.

Then again, why should he? Kannberg has a lot more to be proud of. He plays a major role in San Francisco's Amazing Grease

Records, which recently released a wonderful compilation culled from that city's annual Noise Pop festival. His band Preston School of Industry's first album *All This Sounds Gas* reveals that Pavement's signature sound was less centered on frontman Malkmus than people thought, providing the same languid, word-dense pleasures as Malkmus's first solo effort. And Kannberg has also been instrumental in getting two Pavement releases into stores: a double-DVD that contains a documentary on the band by Lance Bang, all Pavement videos, and portions of two 1999 concerts; and the remastered, double-CD version of the band's first album *Slanted and Enchanted*, which includes the *Watery, Domestic* EP, B-sides, a live show from 1992 and the Holy Grail for Pavement fans: their two sessions for John Peel in a sonically pristine form.

Both releases are a reminder of just how great Pavement could be, not to mention what their descendants could still learn from them.

Interview by **Charlie Bertsch**

You're living in Seattle now. What's that like?

It's cold and foggy. I wish I were living in the desert! It's nice here, though. We have a house, so there's a lot of work to be done.

You haven't been in the public eye much since the Preston School of Industry Tour ended. Were you on an official hiatus from music, or was it just because of the move?

It was just a function of the move. Our house had a basement that wasn't finished and I had to finish at least part of it before I could work again. I have a 4-track, DAT, Pro Tools and all that, but I didn't want to set it up before the space was ready. I started to get antsy though.

So then how much of 'Preston School of

Industry's *All This Sounds Gas* was just you playing by yourself?

Originally it was all me on a digital four-track. I hired these guys to learn the songs off of that. Then we went into a studio and tracked the drums and a basic guitar part and then we transferred it all to Pro Tools and overdubbed on that. On most of the overdubs it's pretty much me.

How many of you?

[Laughs] It depends on the song.

Last fall saw Matador release the *Slow Century* DVD and the remastered *Slanted and Enchanted* as a double CD, which ended up on a lot of critics' best-of lists for the year. I imagine that you'd had more time to move on mentally than the fans, but I wonder: what were your feelings about all this Pavement material coming out?

It was kind of weird. I'd forgotten how it was—it was almost as exciting as putting out a real record again. Matador kept sending me the sheets that say where the reviews are, what the number is in SoundScan, all that kind of stuff . . . ¶ I'd wanted to re-release *Slanted and Enchanted* for a long time. The basic idea was to include the *Watery, Domestic* EP and all the other songs from that era, because they were all over the place. I wanted to see how that would work, with the idea that we might do it with other records as well—to make each one a cohesive package, so people don't have to go all over the place for the material. ¶ I hadn't really listened to that material since we recorded it. When I went out to Gary Young's and had to go through the tapes, it was pretty hard to find all of it. And we had to burn the tapes to get them to play again [laughs]. But listening to all that stuff, it does sound really good. It was kind of

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exciting to listen to it again. It brought back pretty funny memories, especially sitting there with Gary. Gary would be, like, "Aw, yeah, I remember that . . ." and tell this half-hour story.

How is he? He plays a big part in the documentary on the DVD.

He's good. I haven't heard from him since I sent him the DVD. I hope he's all right. That guy could take so much abuse and still be the nicest guy in the world. ¶ I'm really happy about the way *Slanted and Enchanted* came out. The DVD, on the other hand . . . It was supposed to come out in 1999. I'm glad it came out. I think it turned out pretty nice, but I'm also glad it's over with.

My sense is that Stephen stopped participating in the DVD.

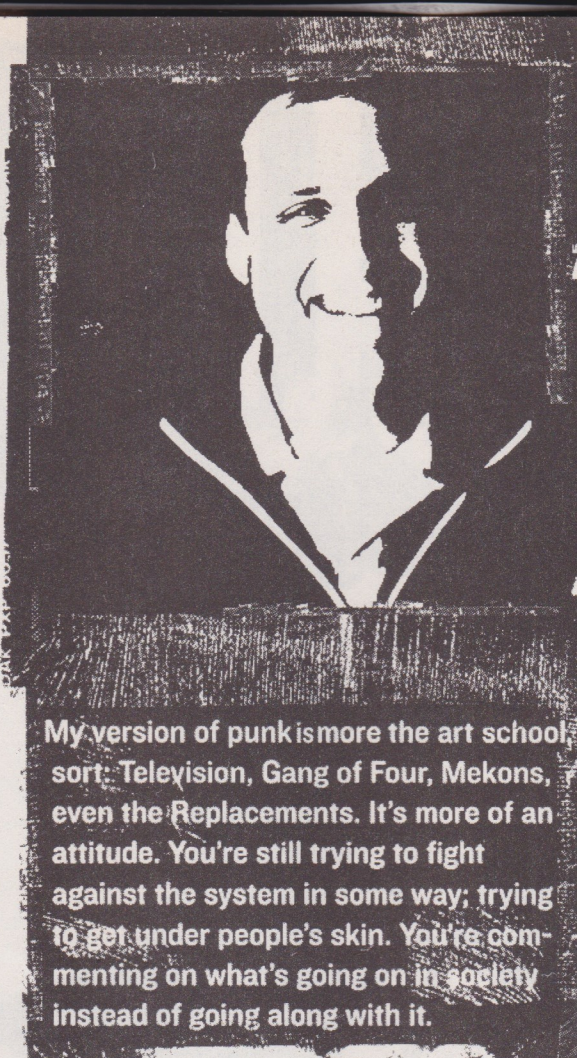
Well, he really didn't want to have anything to do with it. He didn't really even want to have to do with anything *Pavement* at the end there, when the idea for the DVD came up. He was reluctant to do anything. It was nice to get him to even talk about it. That was the problem, at least as far as getting the documentary stuff done. That's why it took so long. Back in 2001 I would have said, "I don't want this thing to ever come out" [laughs] or "It's never going to come out, so why worry about it." But Matador just kept plugging away, saying "Come on, come on, let's get it done."

Where did the archive footage in the DVD come from?

Most of that footage is from my garage. I'm really the only one who saved anything.

With all of the different releases that have come out in the last year and with you taking a break from music while you move in, do you have a sense of what direction you want to pursue once you do get back to making music?

I've got some ideas about what I want to do. On the one hand, I'm thinking that I want to do more of an acoustic album, very basic, like a Dylan record. But then I'm



My version of punk is more the art school sort: Television, Gang of Four, Mekons, even the Replacements. It's more of an attitude. You're still trying to fight against the system in some way; trying to get under people's skin. You're commenting on what's going on in society instead of going along with it.

thinking, "Shit, Beck just put out something like that. I don't want to be like that." But it'll probably be some of that—actually, it will probably be *more* of that, because I don't really have a band.

Then again, when Pavement got started, there wasn't much of a band either. More than most artists, you're probably comfortable with that approach, to just not have a band during the recording process and then put one together after the fact.

To me, it's more exciting to hear things in their initial stages. Hearing a song right after it's finished, almost as if it's a demo, there are so many more surprises than when you hear a song done by a band, and recorded in a really nice studio. I just got a CD of Preston School of Industry playing live near the end of the Wilco tour. I thought that tour was great and I thought the band was playing really well, but I listened to it and was like, "Oh my god, we sound so *boring*!" I want to get away from

that. I want it to sound surprising and weird.

Of course, the flip side of the whole band question is that, with a band like Pavement, there were plenty of surprises. If you listen to different concert bootlegs, the sound might be bad or the playing sloppy, but there's an energy to the performance. The randomness of it kept the sound from becoming boring.

I guess I have to find a band that doesn't know how to play very well. [laughs] ¶ In thinking about a new record, I go back to some of my favorite bands from the late '70s or early '80s, who are very random, like The Fall or Gang of Four. It's funny to hear all these new bands that are trying to sound like that. I don't know—I must be jaded or whatever, but they don't sound as good.

I was talking to Russell Simins from the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion recently about the new New York bands that are getting all this press and he said something similar: "Well, they're doing a good thing, but I just can't hear it." I wonder if it's generational.

It might be. But also, I remember when people who heard Pavement in the early days said "It's like the Fall, but not as good." ¶ I watch *120 Minutes* and see all these bands that are so popular right now and think, "How are people going to like my next record if they like *this*?" [laughs] I'm not going to be a garage band.

One of the things that Pavement played a big role in was broadening the sense of what counted as punk. Or maybe it was more a return to a definition from the early days of punk when the Buzzcocks, Patti Smith, and Joy Division all fit comfortably within the category. How much life do you think the term still has?

My version of punk is more the art school sort: Television, Gang of Four, Mekons, even the Replacements. It's more of an attitude. You're still trying to fight against the system in some way; trying to get under people's skin. You're commenting on what's going on in society instead of going along with it. ©

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LOYD “BULLWACKIE”

WHEN I STARTED, I WAS THE ONLY REGGAE STUDIO IN AMERICA.

Lloyd “Bullwackie” Barnes stood on the last step of the staircase leading to his basement recording studio, holding the sides of his head with both hands. Two inches of dirty water covered the floor. Drops still fell from the ceiling pipes one at a time, hitting the surface and breaking into little rings before fading away. It smelled like the subway. His four-track was soaked; reels of tape were covered in sludge. It was all gone. But instead of folding up his dreams of being a recording engineer, Barnes cleaned up and moved on.

He rented a small storefront a few blocks down on White Plains Road and opened Wackie’s studio and record label. And it is in this spot, in the farthest corner of the North Bronx in the mid-1970s that American Reggae was born as Barnes recorded artists like Horace Andy, Sugar Minott, Wayne Jarrett, the Lovejoys, Lee “Scratch” Perry and Augustus Pablo

In the early ’80s, just as the Jamaican dancehall was turning to DJs and synthesized sounds, Barnes continued to develop the roots and dub sound. Unlike his post-punk British counterparts like Aswad and Steel Pulse, who favored a jazz-rock-reggae hybrid, Barnes preferred to extend the innovations of close friends like Jackie Mittoo and Lee “Scratch” Perry. He unleashed classics from Andy (*Dancehall Style*), which became the template for Massive Attack’s post-punk/post-hip-hop hybrid), Minott (the underground hit, “Wicked Ago Feel It”), and the Lovejoys (the criminally overlooked, dub-fest *Lover’s Rock*), as well as dub records

from Bullwackie and the house-band (*Tribesman Assault*, *Nature’s Dub*, *African Roots*). These records remain influential marvels of cavernous bass, soulful singing, and mighty grooves. They were clearly ahead of their time.

Flash forward to today: a full-fledged Wackies revival is underway. Dubheads comb record bins for Wackie’s finely-pressed vinyl inscribed with the label’s lion and flag logo like they’re in search of the Holy Grail. To aid their quest, Barnes recently struck a deal with German techno pioneers Basic Channel to jointly reissue 20 titles on CD and vinyl. Plus, his long-lost 1979 rap record, “Wack Rap” by Solid C, Bobby D and Kool Drop, is being reissued by San Francisco’s Re-Joint label. And the Andy classic will come out in conjunction with the East Village’s Jammyland shop next year.

Barnes still works in the North Bronx, but he expanded his operation to Internet radio broadcasting and started a new roots label called PLUSH.

Interview by **Jeff Chang**

Let’s start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

I was born in Kingston Jamaica, that’s 1944. I grew up really in Jonestown.

Did you go around to a lot of the sound systems [the Jamaican term for big parties with DJs and dancing] in the area?

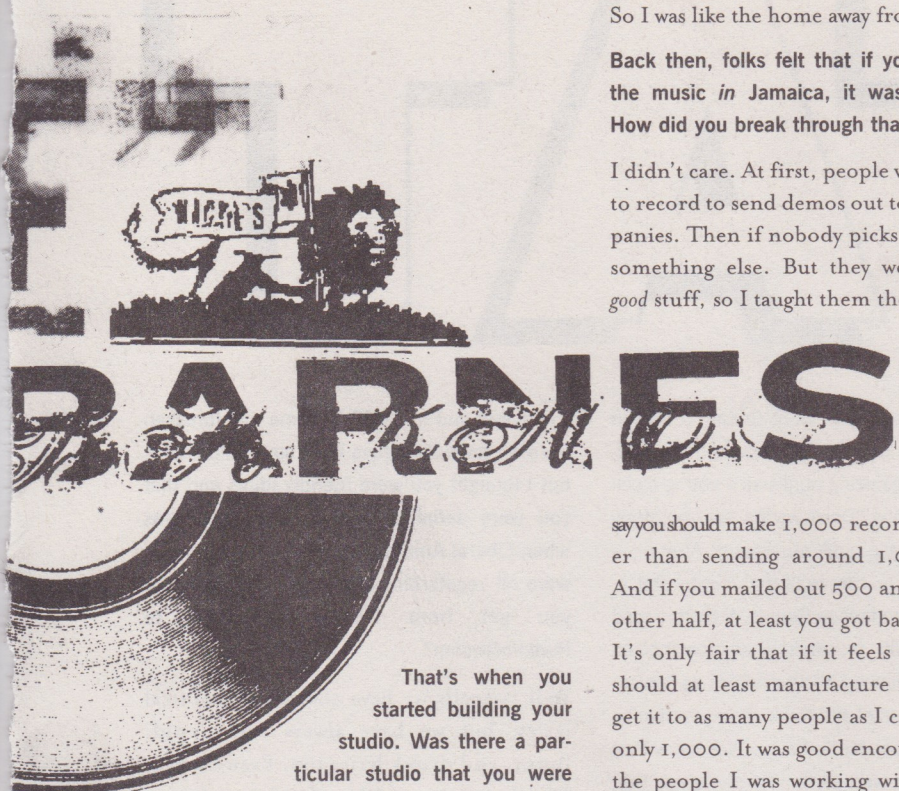
You didn’t have to go—it was right there. Music was always coming over the fence. I

used to hang with Stranger Cole and Ken Boothe, so I went to the studios in Jamaica. I did a couple of recordings with Prince Buster. I used to listen to a lot of Skatalites. I kind of grew up in the ska era, ’til it turned over into the rock steady.

You came to the Bronx in 1967. Why?

I first came here on a school visa. I did electrical insulation and wiring in school in Jamaica, but I came here to continue in upholstery and interior decorating. But in my mind, I was always into this studio situation. ¶ First I built the sound system. In those days, there was a very small quantity of Jamaican people in New York. But with more Jamaicans and Caribbean people coming, island politics started to surface in the New York area and the place started to get more violent amongst the young people. My sound had gained some popularity and because of that, the Green [supporters of the conservative Jamaican Labour Party] want to be there and the Red [supporters of the democratic-socialist People’s National Party] want to be there. But when they come together, they can’t get along! After playing at some party in the South Bronx, they had this shootout. After that happened, I said, “That’s enough for me,” and I got out of that part of it. That’s really why I switched over from the sound system: I wanted to stay with the music, but I wanted to be at less risk.





That's when you started building your studio. Was there a particular studio that you were modeling it after?

Growing up, I used to go to Federal Studio, which is now Tuff Gong. It used to be a two-track studio, so there was no overdubbing like today. You play the rhythm, you sing same time—everything was done one-shot. You work out the song and then they say, "green light." I loved it then, I used to watch a lot. By living in America with a sound system, playing the music, missing Jamaica, you begin to get ideas. You start looking back. So I figure, well, we get a four-track machine and start doing some production. When I started, I was the only reggae studio in America.

How did you assemble your Wackies team?

There was a couple of New York bands like New Breed, Reckless Breed. The studio was like a place where all people—youths who have an interest in reggae creation that had left Jamaica—could really find to hang around with a group of guys with the same mentality. You had new people who wanted to learn how

to play stuff, so it was like a studio and a little music school at the same time. A lot of people learned to play right there. If you're a musician and you have nowhere to go, the first place somebody sent you to is Wackies. So I was like the home away from home.

Back then, folks felt that if you didn't make the music in Jamaica, it wasn't legitimate. How did you break through that?

I didn't care. At first, people would come in to record to send demos out to record companies. Then if nobody picks it up, they do something else. But they were doing *real* good stuff, so I taught them the way. I would

say you should make 1,000 records, it's cheaper than sending around 1,000 cassettes. And if you mailed out 500 and you sold the other half, at least you got back something. It's only fair that if it feels good to me I should at least manufacture it and try and get it to as many people as I can—even if it's only 1,000. It was good encouragement for the people I was working with. Instead of just having it rolled up on tapes, I was trying to get it out to the public, trying to get people to listen. Finally WBLS put Sugar Minnot's "Sometime Girl" into rotation. I was so happy just to know that it got there; that it was playing on the same radio station that major labels were playing on.

All the folks you worked with back then, do you still keep in contact with them?

Yes and the good thing about it, I still have them as my friends. We talk frequently and we all look back at that situation. Sugar used to say, about when he was in Jamaica, "You don't have time to really work on the music." But we lived in the studio, we had more time to do things and we had more time to experiment.

Your studio is not what you think of as the classic Jamaican studio where everyone lines up at the gate in the morning and the producer comes in and everyone hopes to get his ear so they might be able to voice a 7". It seems like you have been more interested in building a group of people that make music together.

Yeah, and support each other. We're just trying to make a good record. Some of the musicians are *still* here with us. When we record somebody, even if they are new, you find that Claudette from Lovejoys is giving them harmony or Shalom is giving harmony.

The Basic Channel is German techno people who grew up on your music and now they are bringing out all these releases to a whole new generation. How does that feel, knowing that you started doing this 30 years ago and it's still around?

I'm glad I made the right choice. I can tell you it wasn't a money choice. It was a choice of love, of what you believe in. As long as you can survive—even if it's minimum wage—doing something that you love and believe in, it's best to do it, because you can't see 20 or 30 years down the line. Don't try to be *everybody*. Don't try to do *everything*. Whatever you do, do the best of it. It worked well for me, and I really give thanks to all the people who supported me in their own way and made me the man I am today. ¶ I could have given up many times. I remember working at Wackies and I had my house and my studio—and I had my electric bill for my home and my electric bill for my studio: I had to make a decision which one I was going to pay. I gave up the one at home! I told myself my studio is in the street where everybody comes and that's my opportunity. If I lose my electricity there, it's like my pride is gonna be so hurt. If I lose my electricity at home, I'll just be lighting my candles. Maybe as much as seven, eight, or 10 times I've had to make that choice. I remember once I had to give up the whole house. I used to sleep in the drum room at the studio because I couldn't give up the studio. We wasn't really making no money, but I had to take care of another 10, 15 guys who had nowhere else to go. I used to think every musician is my family. So as long as we make the floor clean, we could sleep. ¶ A lot of us who was there, in that original Wackies studio, from that stage we grew. Some people have their own homes, their own studios. So I'm really happy I made that sacrifice. I'm so grateful, because in reality, the music has *kept* me. I don't want to be angry, because the next man is angry. I wanna do good things, I wanna live right. I want to be an example. I want to be remembered as one of the good ones. I'm not gonna protect it so long and go spoil it now! ☺



FAT

You wouldn't expect Fat Mike, the brains (or whatever you want to call it) behind punk rock party bands NOFX and Me First and the Gimme Gimmes, to have started a website called PunkVoter.com dedicated to organizing punks as a voting block and lobbying force. This is, after all the guy that sang "Don't wanna hear no hippy shit" on the song "Jeff Wears Birkenstocks"—a snotty dis on the peace punk movement. After all— isn't talking about working with the system to make a better world just more of that "hippy shit"?

But, for Mike, desperate times called for desperate measures, and when George W Bush ended up in the White House, Mike ended up starting Punk Voter. "The 2000 presidential election showed us that ANYONE, especially young people, CAN make a huge difference," Mike explains as "objective one" of the site. "Apathy can be fatal. As concerned members of the punk rock community, we need to become ACTIVE in the election process. Voting is the crucial first step. We know that you care, now show it. Don't let history repeat itself." Pretty heady words from the same guy that penned "Hot dog in a hallway."

But maybe going from *Punk in Drublic* to Punk Voter isn't an unexpected move for Fat Mike. After all, for every "Drugs are Good" NOFX has, they have a "Murder the Government" waiting in the wings. But even more than the hidden politics of his bands, the not-so-hidden politics of his long-running indie label, Fat Wreck Chords, makes the move to Punk Voter a little less of a head-scratcher.

Success doesn't come easily in the indie world, let alone the kind of success—multiple albums that have sold well over 100,000 copies—Fat Wreck Chords has seen. Yet that success hasn't come at the normal costs of band and worker exploitation. Instead, Fat has some of the best royalty rates in the underground for its bands and a full bevy of benefits for its workers. It's certainly a legacy that goes beyond the expectations songs like "Moron Brothers" would leave you with. And it's a legacy that goes beyond the So-Cal sound that his label is so closely associated with. While the roster of bands recording for Fat still includes a healthy dose of the sunny California punk rock sound that brought the label to the dance, Mike has built up a label that goes beyond the simple sound stereotypes that some lob at it (and yeah, we're probably as guilty of that as anybody).

Admirably, for all the success of his bands and label, Fat Mike doesn't crow about it. In fact, he rarely does interviews and was hesitant to talk to *Punk Planet* about his political work. But AK Press' Ramsey Kanaan (for all his radical anarchist politics, he's a NOFX fan) pressed him to do it and he finally agreed. Mike's political perspective is a fairly unique one in the underground—he firmly believes that to affect change in the US, we need to work within the system instead of outside of it—but it's a perspective that's worth considering as the 2004 election season gears up.

Introduction by **Daniel Sinker**

Interview by **Ramsey Kanaan**

Photos by **Jessamyn Harris**

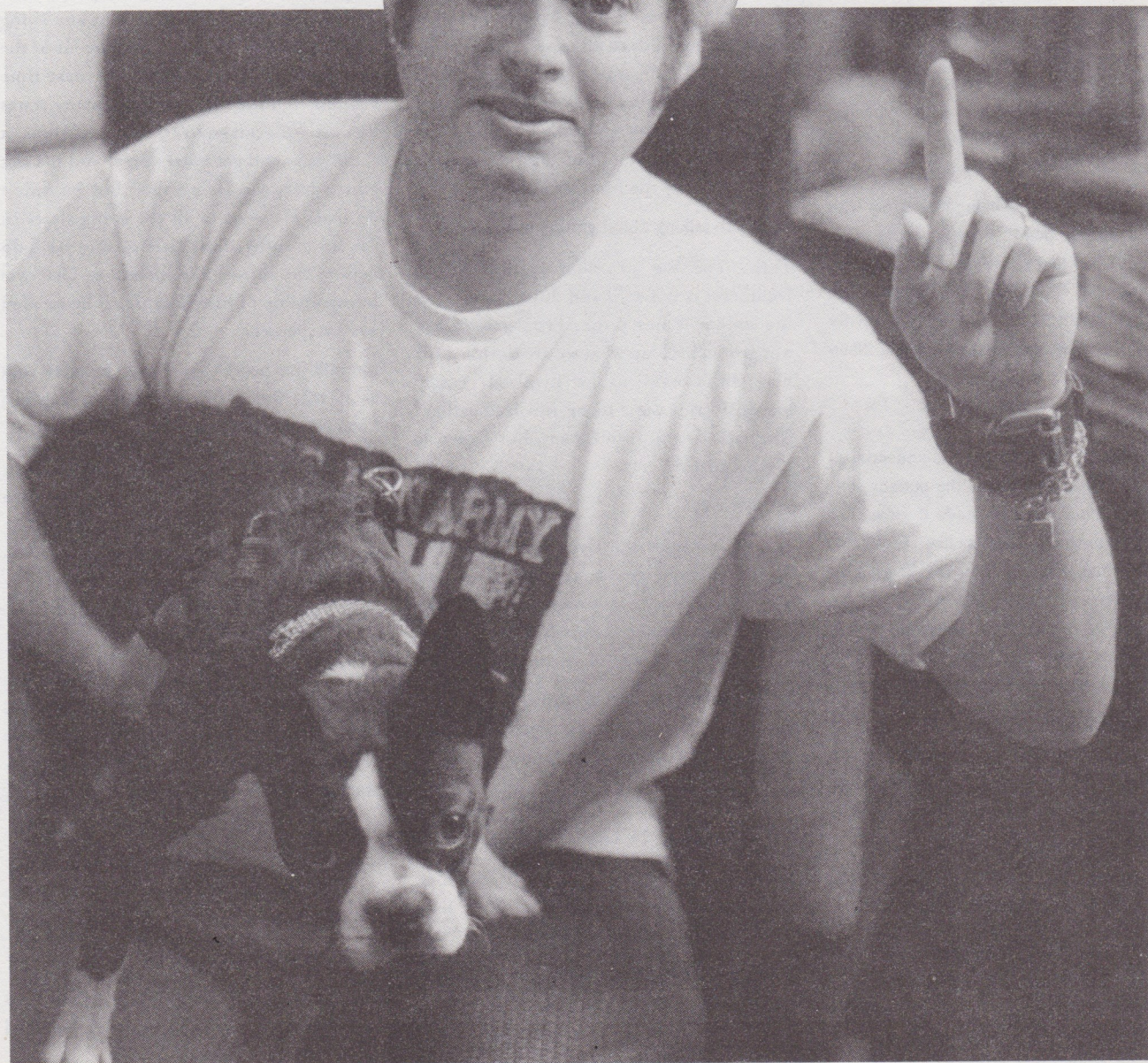
I first met you in 1988 in some god-forsaken German town. You guys were super nice folks, but I thought you were friendly idiots and that you were definitely not political. That was when *Liberal Animation* just came out and we were all vegetarians and vegans. So how did you get from *Liberal Animation* to *PunkVoter.com*?

Well, actually we have always had political lyrics, but we have always had stupid, funny, and drunk lyrics too. Even all over *Liberal Animation*, like the song about "Freedumb", which is about censorship and the PMRC. We have always been political, but we weren't very smart and were more interested in drinking. All of our records since then have had social, political, pro-gay, and pro-tolerance lyrics, but we have never been known as a political band. And I have never been that political until Bush took office.

Does it bother you that your audience is probably more interested in the party side of the band? I do not mean that as a value judgment, I like to party and slam too—I broke my ribs slamming at the last NOFX gig at the Trocadero. [laughs] But if you like the more humorous side of the band, are the politics going to get lost?

No, I don't think so. Take Propagandhi, for instance. Their first album had some comedy on it alongside *shitloads* of politics. Their witty lyrics make the political pill a lot easier to swallow than, say, a band like Crass does.

MIKE



That is one of the objectives of Punk Voter: to build a coalition of punk voters who can individually and collectively influence public policy. One part of Punk Voter is to get Bush out of office. But another part is to get a lobbyist, or a lobby of informed people that can make social change.

No, I agree totally.

You have to be fun to have people watch you and enjoy your band. NOFX are fun live, but half the songs we sing about are serious subjects. But since we are having fun on stage, people think we are a joke—a Southern California skate band.

But how do you balance being humorous with making a serious point? How does the audience react when you play great political songs like “Don’t Call Me White” and “Murder the Government” with “Moron Brothers” and witty stage banter? Why shouldn’t everything taken as a joke?

That’s a good point.

Well, how much do you think it is understandable when people won’t take the politics seriously, even though you’ve made it clear that you give money to groups like Food Not Bombs? When Propagandhi say they give money to the exact same people—be it Food Not Bombs or AK Press or whoever—everybody believes them. But when I argue that NOFX is a political band, no one believes me.

With Propagandhi, everyone goes “of course,” whereas when we give money to Food Not Bombs, people think we must be taking a piss or making a satire out of fucking whatever.

Is getting people to take your politics seriously part of the intent behind PunkVoter.com?

The intent is to unite punk rockers and disfranchised people to vote as a force. We have a large group of people here and most of them don’t do shit. They might go to a

protest, but they don’t vote because they think it is a waste of time. Why can’t we get a half million kids to all to say we are going to vote for the same person? The NRA does it, the National League of Women Voters do it. There are only a couple million of those people, but they all vote the same way. Why the fuck can’t we do it?

So you’re talking about getting organized.

Yeah. The big problem is that voting Democrat is not cool and doing it through the system is not punk. Propagandhi are not gonna back up what we are doing; Anti Flag don’t want to be involved; crusty bands do not want to be involved either. They all want to vote Green, but Green is just not realistic.

In what way?

You can vote for the Greens in local elections and maybe even in state elections, but all you are doing by voting for the Green Party in a presidential election is fucking up and making sure that the Republicans win.

So what about the argument that it was actually Gore who cost Gore the election because if Gore actually stood by any principles . . .

First of all, Gore *won* the election.

Not according to the Electoral College.

According to the Electoral College, Gore won because he won Florida. Had they recounted Florida, he *would* have won.

Sure, but he was too spineless to say “I demand a recount!”

I will say that Ralph, Nader ruined it.

Apparently Nader told a lot of people that he wasn’t going to campaign in any swing states. All he needed was five percent of the vote to get matching funds the next time around—it didn’t matter how many states he won. You can go to 10 different cities in California and get more voters and it’s not gonna hurt the Democrats. But he didn’t do that. He went to all the swing states in the last months of the election and yes, I do believe he ruined the election. That was irresponsible of him because all he needed was five percent.

But still, his point—and I have to agree with it—is that there is little difference between Republicans and Democrats.

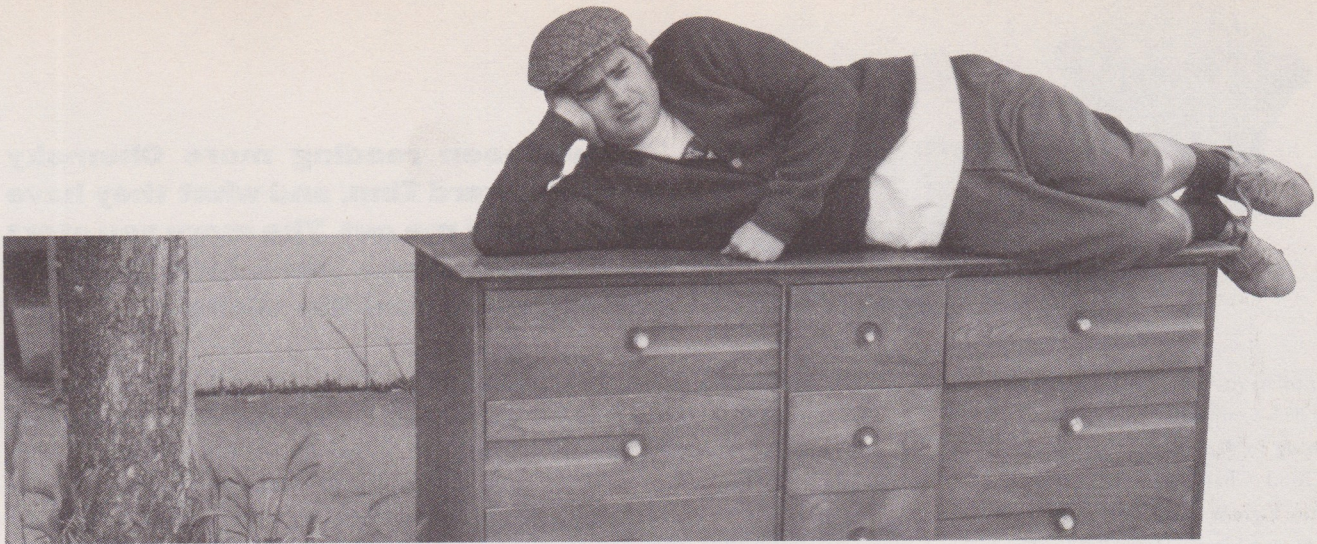
I think there is a big difference between Democrats and Republicans. I want to see abortion kept legal in this country. The world hated us with Clinton, but they really hate us now. And there is no way we would have gone to war with Iraq if Gore was president.

Actually, Clinton bombed Iraq for longer than the Bush’s ever have and ever will. And it was under the Clinton administration, with Vice President Gore, that half a million Iraqi children starved to death under UN sanctions.

Yeah, that’s all bad stuff, but things are worse right now. Saddam Hussein was a terrible, terrible dictator, everyone hates him and rightly so . . .

. . . especially the Iraqis . . .

. . . but to be President, you *have* to be a diplomat. You *have* to go along with the world



and *can not* just be a rogue. Clinton had a pretty terrible foreign policy too, but he was not hated around the world like we are now.

The argument might just be that Clinton was a slicker tyrant. Because again, he did exactly the same stuff as the Bush family has done in terms of foreign policy, basically saying, "America is going to do what we want. We are gonna try and gather allies and coalitions, but we are going to bomb whomever we want—Yugoslavia, Sudan, Somalia."

Maybe not in this case. I do not think Clinton would have acted unilaterally against Iraq right now.

Well, there was not a day during his presidency when he did not bomb Iraq. And he fired even more missiles when he got caught with cigars in strange places.

Right. Like I've said, Clinton's foreign policy was pretty terrible. But if you ask any liberal today whether they'd rather have a Democrat or Republican in office, what are they going to say?

They are going to say "Democrat," but I think they are wrong. Democrats get away with a lot more because people assume they are nicer, friendlier, and more ecologically-minded because they have better rhetoric. But the reality is that Clinton brought in legislation like NAFTA.

The Republicans would have done the same thing.

Sure, which is why the argument is that they are same—they are beholden to the same corporate interests.

They all have big money interests, but they are *different* interests.

Gore is an oil man as much as Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld.

Well, I don't know about that.

Well, be that as it may, I guess my argument is that change comes about not by voting for a different politician but by organizing and getting it together.

No, I do not think that is the case in this country. It is too powerful and too huge. What I think would have been great is if Nader told Gore "Put me in your cabinet and I won't run anymore." And if you give someone like Ralph Nader influence in the Oval Office, I think that is going to bring about change faster. Even if he only gets *one* out of the 10 things he was trying to do, done it is still one thing that would not have gotten done with Condoleezza Rice in the cabinet. I'm just a realist. We are *not* going to get a Green Party president in the country.

I would not want a Green Party president, that's not my point. My point is that change did not come about because of who you did or did not vote for. No one voted for civil rights, no one voted to abolish slavery, no one voted to end the Vietnam War. Those major changes in American history came about because people organized and did it despite opposition from that state.

That is one of the objectives of Punk Voter: to build a coalition of punk voters who can individually and collectively influence pub-

lic policy. One part of Punk Voter is to get Bush out of office. But another part is to get a lobbyist, or a lobby of informed people that can make social change. ¶ The Democrats and Republicans are both terrible, but I really believe that the Democrats are slightly better. And I would rather have a *slightly* better party than what we have now. The Republican's trickle down theory of economics is ridiculous—it does not work at all. The Democratic Party is a little more for the working man than that.

They used to be, but Nixon was actually more for the working person than the current Democratic party.

Well *that* is why I believe we all have a lot of work to do. We've gotta make the Democratic Party more left, more liberal, and care about people more. And we have to do that through the system.

Is that part of what next year's Rock Against Bush tour is all about?

The tour is an anti-Bush tour, which is gonna be a couple months of free shows at colleges across the US. NOFX will be on it the whole time and different bands will get on for different portions of it. Dillinger Four said they wanted to be on some of it, Anti-Flag said they wanted to do some of it, and some bigger bands too. Green Day said they would do some shows, so hopefully we will get 5,000- to 10,000 people a day. We will have a voter registration booth and hopefully will get a few thousand kids everyday to register that would not have registered. ¶ At the same time, there will be



I have been reading more Chomsky and Howard Zinn, and what they have to say bums me out. The more you start reading, the more you inform yourself and the more your life sucks.

a compilation that comes out. The *Rock Against Bush* comp will come out on Fat and I am going to get a lot of big bands—bands like Good Charlotte—on it. Weezer, and the Foo Fighters said they'd do it, so did Sum 41 and Green Day. Getting big bands and small bands to all stand together against Bush is what is important.

On the new NOFX album, *War on Errorism*, you name-check books by Michael Moore, Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky, and Eric Schlosser, author of *Fast Food Nation*. Is this stuff you have been reading recently?

Absolutely. I seriously have trouble sleeping at night because I read these books and get so pissed. Michael Moore is the everyday common Joe's author—he is funny and you can understand what he is saying. I feel that NOFX is like the Michael Moore of punk rock I agree.

When I was in college, I read a Chomsky book and I never finished it. It was just tough to read some of that stuff. But now I have been reading more Chomsky and Howard Zinn, and what they have to say bums me out. The more you start reading, the more you inform yourself and the more your life sucks. Sometimes it seems like ignorance is bliss.

But it could also be argued that you have been energized by being bummed out by the Bush regime and now you want to do something about it.

Right! That is the point: You want to say "Fuck it" but you can't. You have to be positive.

Which has been the rule of punk.

Yeah, you have to feel you can make a change. If we had half a million people and they all vote together, we can make a huge difference. There is no punk rock lobby. We need one. We are supposed to be caring people and all we have are anarchists and

crusties. That was why I was singing those anti-peace punk songs back in the early '80s, because I thought it was ridiculous. [laughs]

But at the same time you were influenced by that stuff, particularly The Subhumans.

Sure, but I never even became a vegetarian until the late '90s when I saw an HBO show on the relationship between humans and animals.

So how does Fat Wreck Chords fit in with your politics?

One thing that always bothers me is that punkers somehow have the impression that we are some faux major label or that we are not really an independent.

Why does that bother you?

It bothers me because I started Fat out of my closet, without any corporate backing, and I've always run the label according to punk rock ethics. It bothers me because I think we are probably the best-run and most artist-friendly punk rock label—particularly in terms of our policies. Some zines like *Punk Planet*, they never pay attention to us. Really, there are a lot of "cooler" independent labels that get much more attention than Fat.

What makes you the "best-run" label?

We are a profit-sharing company, both with our bands and our employees. Our employees get paid a lot and our bands get higher royalty rates than anybody. We pay our royalties on time and in full. We let all our bands keep their own publishing. We only do one-record deals with bands and up until last year we never had a band leave.

Who left?

Less than Jake—they came here for a second and then went back to a major. And Teen

Idols just left. But besides that, we have never had any bands leave. We pretty much do everything we can to make everyone happy: the kids, the bands, and our employees. We have great retirement plans and we have great medical care.

So why do you think punks are suspect about your label?

Because a lot of our bands got popular. People do not like the fact that some of our artists have sold 250,000 records. That's not supposed to be cool.

That's fucking great!

We have always tried really hard to be a very PC company. To be a model of how a company should be. I think we deserve a little a credit for that. We have *always* been political, even in the early days.

Yeah, I always thought that you were. What you and your band and label do is critically important. Unfortunately, the average NOFX fan is a fucking asshole, which is probably where the problem lies.

Yeah.

What do you attribute the success of NOFX to? In many ways you haven't played by the rules of the game: You do not do videos; you don't typically grant interviews.

We have not done an interview in seven years. I'm not doing this interview to make NOFX bigger—I am doing this interview to make more people go to PunkVoter.com and to express my political views. I think it's important as a public figure to let the kids know what is going on. If kids have any respect for you, they may take your opinion and change theirs. It happens to me all the time—I hear someone talk about something different and it changes my life. That's what intelligence is about: Changing your mind and listening. ©

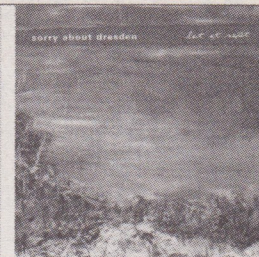
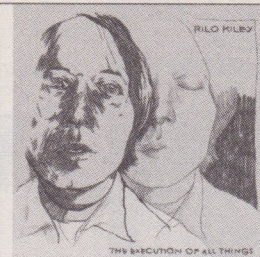
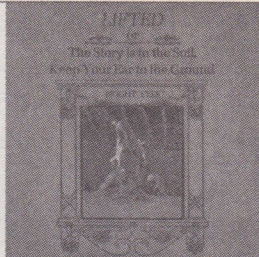
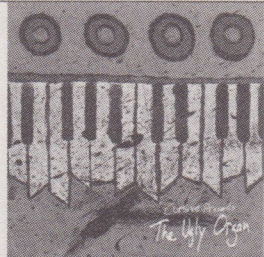
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04

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CURSIVE (01)

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The Ugly Organ is a brilliant leap forward. ★★★★★ - Rolling Stone

Organ raises the Saddle Creek bar in terms of sheer psychiatric-rock intensity. A- - Entertainment Weekly

A marvelous collection of riddles and left turns. (Tim Kasher is) a terrific howler, conjuring anguish and disgust instead of mere rage. - New York Times

(Tim) rouses his powerful, nervy voice to recite lyrics that are effectively postmodern, three-minute bursts of literature--accompanied by intricate guitars, carnival organ lines and dramatic cello swoops. ★★★★★ - Blender

A dozen dizzying songs that'll leave you curled up in a ball and reveling in someone else's misery. - Esquire



"...the best up-and-coming rock groups don't always germinate in big coastal cities and college towns and seep into the heartland. Sometimes it goes the other way around." - TIME Magazine



(02) BRIGHT EYES

LIFTED OR THE STORY IS IN THE SOIL,
KEEP YOUR EAR TO THE GROUND
CD/2xLP (LBJ-46)

One of the Top 50 Albums of the Year.
★★★★ - Rolling Stone

Conor Oberst suffers like Elliott Smith, yelps like Robert Smith, and testifies like Patti Smith. Result: best indie-rock record of the year. - Rolling Stone

Oberst pulls off everything in this sprawling bravura work with ease and command - Los Angeles Times

Unlike most child prodigies, he's still getting better, a decade after he began. - New York Times

It's actually one of the more convincing cases anyone's made for the validity of young-white-male angst since *Nevermind*. - SPIN

(03) SADDLE CREEK 50 - VARIOUS ARTISTS (LBJ-50) 2xCD/LP *

(04) RILO KILEY - THE EXECUTION OF ALL THINGS (LBJ-47) CD/LP

(05) SORRY ABOUT DRESDEN - LET IT REST (LBJ-52) CD

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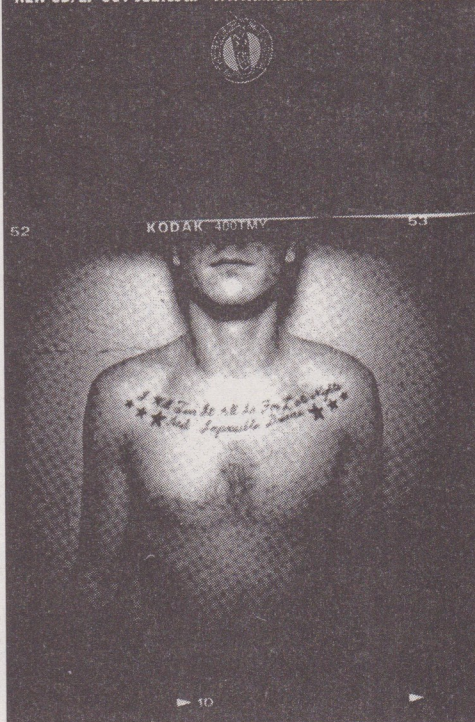
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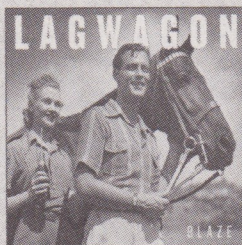
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Your monthly source for new punk rock releases NO. 37 May 2003

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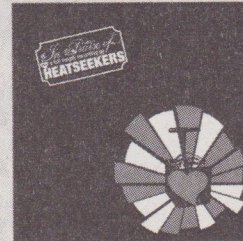
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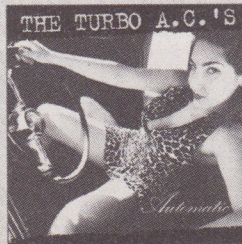
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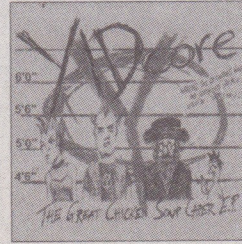
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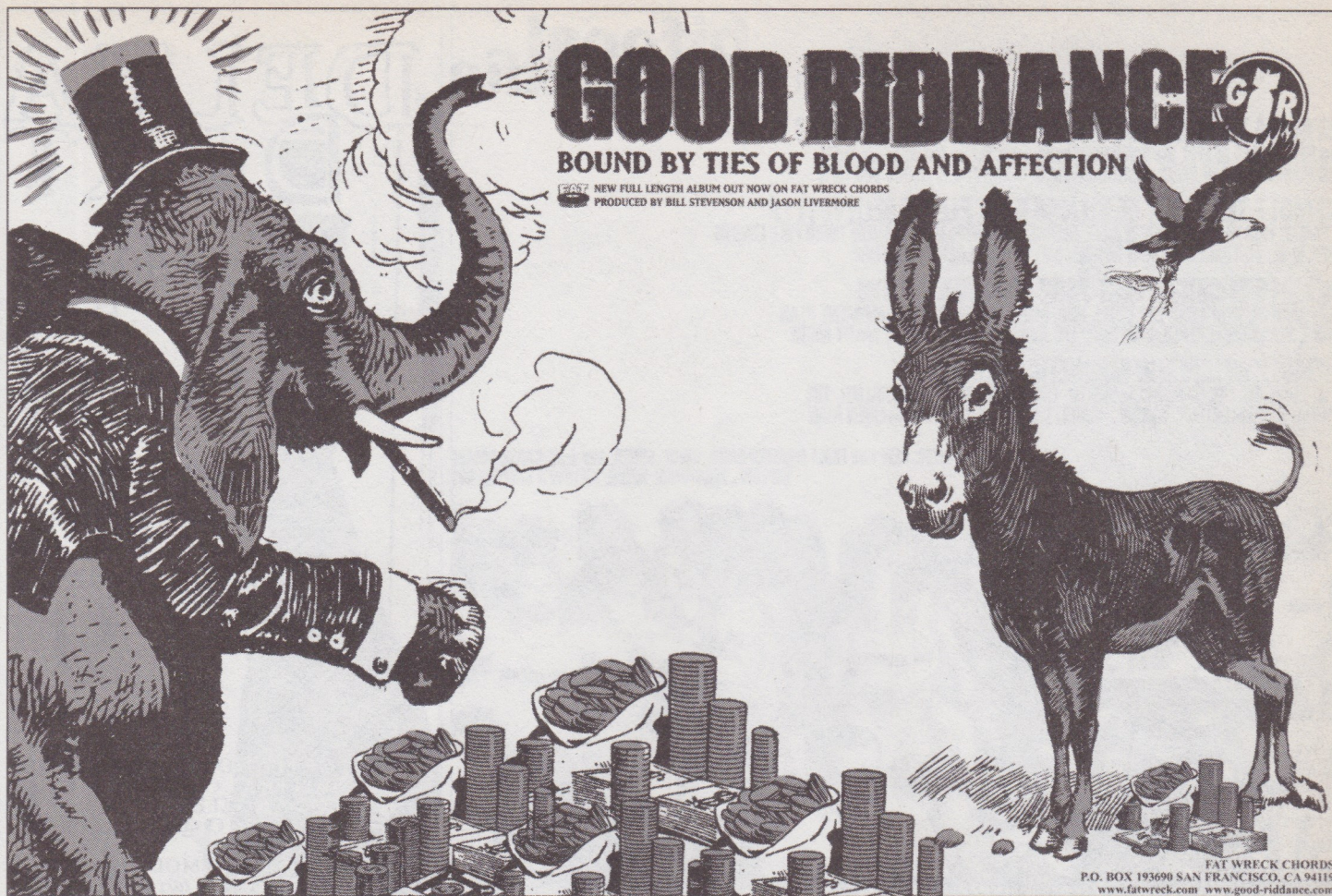
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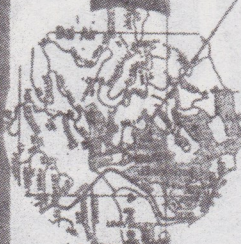
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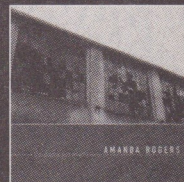
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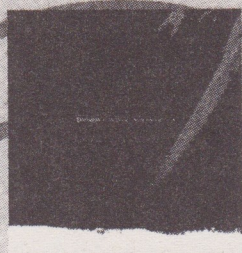


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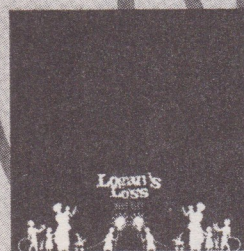
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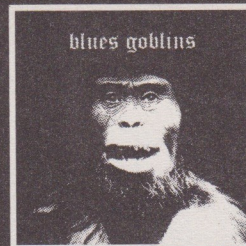
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BLUES GOBLINS

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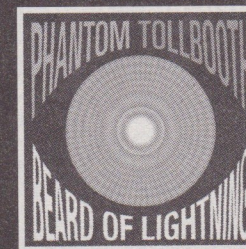
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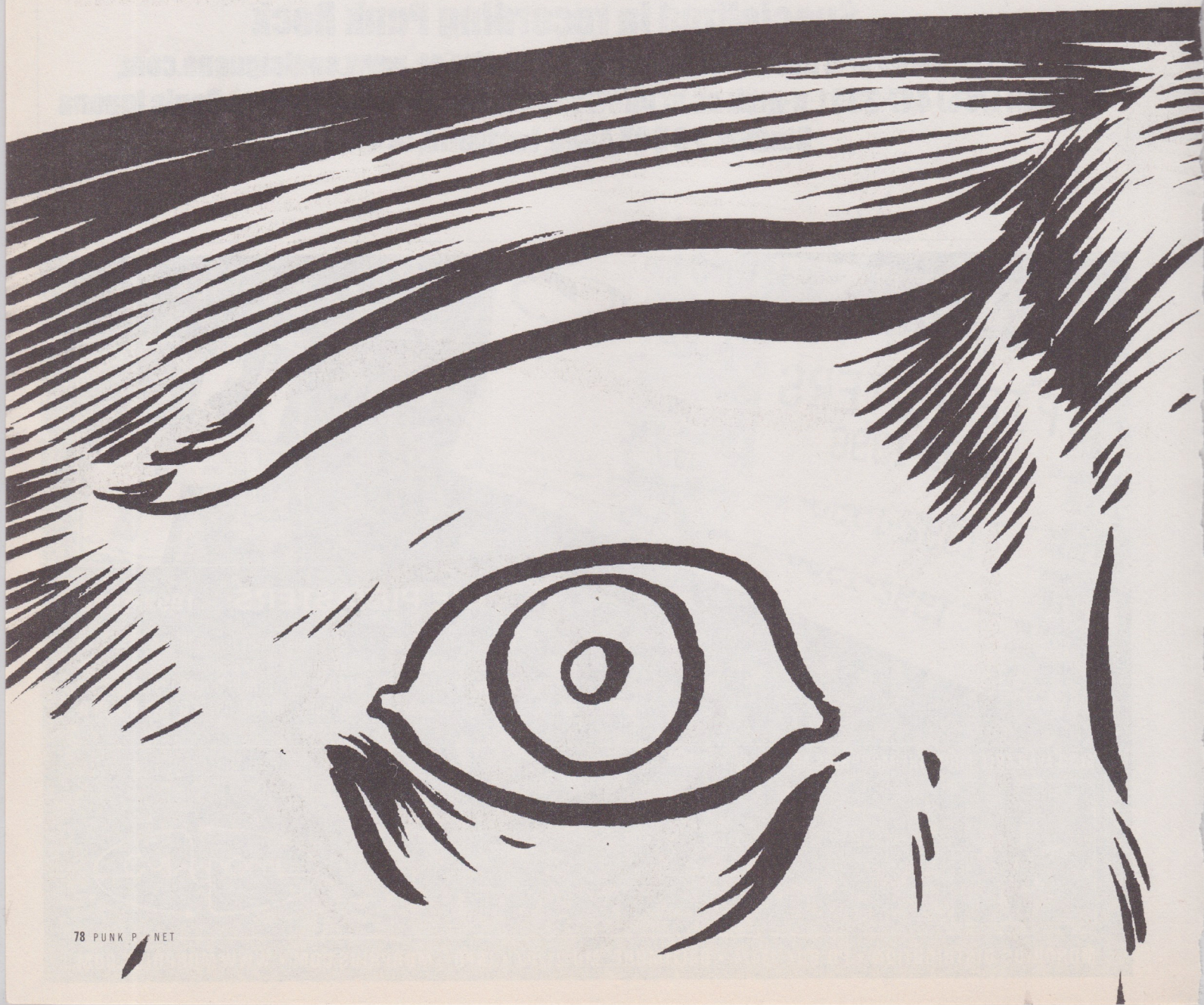
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AN ARMY OF NONE

ALL ALONE AT THE ASS END OF THE WAR ON TERROR

A SOLDIER'S TALE BY TR

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL HORNSCHEMEIER



What follows are a series of letters sent to Punk Planet by a soldier currently in the Army. His name has been changed to protect his identity. It should go without saying, yet certainly bears making very clear, that his opinions are his own and do not represent any group of people or the US Army.

Dear You,

Over the last few months, it's been all but impossible to avoid interviews with military personnel in Iraq on CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News. Even the most podunk stations imaginable seem to have a reporter or two embedded with the "fightin' 409s." The soldiers that fill your screen all seem to say the same thing: "We are here to liberate Iraq", "We want to go home", "Hi mom." You don't learn much of the realities of war or their day-to-day lives. And you certainly never get inside their heads. Welcome inside mine.

I am a soldier in the United States Army with orders under Operation Enduring Freedom and this is my story, including all the ugliness that normal people would keep to themselves. It's not going to be as action-packed as most war stories because, like many in the armed forces, my war has not been action-packed. I'm in the middle of America, where the beef flows like water and vegetables grow in cans. My story is a tale of boredom, frustration, and depression. The only conflict is in my head—I am utterly against the war in Iraq and any other war this administration may intend to wage, yet my daily routine is spent supporting the invasion of Iraq. I'm probably the last person you'd ever expect to be in the military, but I am. Lucky me.

—TR

To Whom It May Concern:

One would think that with all the money going to national defense that some of it would go towards building up the communities that grow around military installations. However, step outside any military post or base and you will find nothing but pawn shops, strip clubs, "cash now" loan sharks, restaurants providing food from cultures we have conquered in past wars, and used car lots preying upon poor soldiers who—probably for the first time in their lives—have more cash than they know what to do with.

My environment has a heavy influence on my emotional state, and conversely, my perception of my environment is distorted by how I feel. Oklahoma files down your senses to the quick. Your perceptions have less range from lack of stimuli, but what little you do sense, you feel deeply. Living here too long is like being an old safecracker who has sanded his fingers raw for so long that his fingerprints are a faded memory and he can feel a fly's wings vibrating from across the room. Sometimes the landscape even makes your eyes feel like they've sprung hangnails—but only when you're hungrily gazing from an all-night bender spent trying to dull that acute perception of your austere surroundings.

Oklahoma has a sad history full of dumb assholes with haywire survival instincts on quixotic quests for gold buffalo meat. The region has never gained enough altitude to go downhill—

Oklahoma has been wallowing in the gutter since it was under the sea thousands of years ago.

Geronimo had his ignoble end here after he was chewed up and made palatable for America. He finally succumbed to pneumonia after signing autographs at the World's Fair and rubbing elbows with Teddy Roosevelt at his inaugural ceremony (all the while he was a federal prisoner). It was an anti-climatic finale for one of America's first terrorists—and one of our favorites, as well. Geronimo is the patron saint of the doomed romantic. Soldiers shout his name for good luck before jumping out of airplanes.

Thinking of Geronimo makes me wonder how our present terrorists will be viewed through the distorted lens of history. I wouldn't be surprised if in a few decades the Afghani tourist bureau sold maps of Osama Bin Laden's burial site to American tourists with zinc oxide slathered across their bulbous noses. It's an ugly thing to imagine, but it's an ugly time. It doesn't take much imagination. Our enemies are our past allies and our allies are losers.

—TR

Hey—

You may be wondering why I joined. I wasn't tricked or fooled into joining. And I wasn't put at ease when my recruiter put on Operation Ivy at a follow-up appointment. And I certainly didn't join out of any sense of patriotic duty or for life experience. Instead, take a beautiful woman, throw in no future in a small town and you have a desperate 18-year-old kid. Yes, I joined the Army because I was in love with a girl and she enlisted. I followed her, believing that she might be my only chance at happiness. Needless to say, she wasn't and I know it was a mistake now. I knew it then too, I think, but I am a gambler by nature.

Things might have been different if I did better in high school. Whenever, I got a bad grade, my dad would say, "That's all right. If you can't get into college then you can join the army—they accept anyone!" He was right, if a tad callous.

Every instinct told me to run as I went through the process of enlistment. I held fast because every time I'd think of my girlfriend, my stomach would turn upside-down, blood would rush to my head and I knew I'd do anything for her. I rationalized my enlistment by telling myself that I was going to work in the medical field and that all my work would be oriented toward helping people, not harming them. If I knew how that would be perverted six years later, I probably would have gone home. Or maybe not—I was blinded by young dumb love.

My MOS (that's army-speak for job) was as a medical lab technician and had the longest training period for newly-enlisted soldiers. It was a year and half long (compared to the usual three to six months). A year of that was with drill sergeants. Within three months, I had broken up with my girlfriend.

During the first couple of weeks in training, you are under what's termed "lock down." You can't go anywhere or do anything. You go to class, do PT (physical training), and polish your boots.

During this time, I thought my girlfriend would visit me, but she never did. Now I understand that she was a young girl away from home for the first time, and that while the military demanded a lot of your time and took some of your freedoms away, her personal time had fewer limits than ever before. At the time, I didn't know that and all sorts of thoughts were going through my head. I was under enough stress with rabid drill sergeants, long hours, and living with a few dozen men in one room. It didn't help that my fellow soldiers played devil's advocate, telling me that they saw her with other guys. They had no idea what she looked like and I knew it, but it still tortured me inside. I rationally thought of a different complaint—that after all my sacrifices and leaps of faith, she owed me at least one visit

in the afternoon, when she had personal time and I was stuck under a ramada shining my shoes in the setting sun.

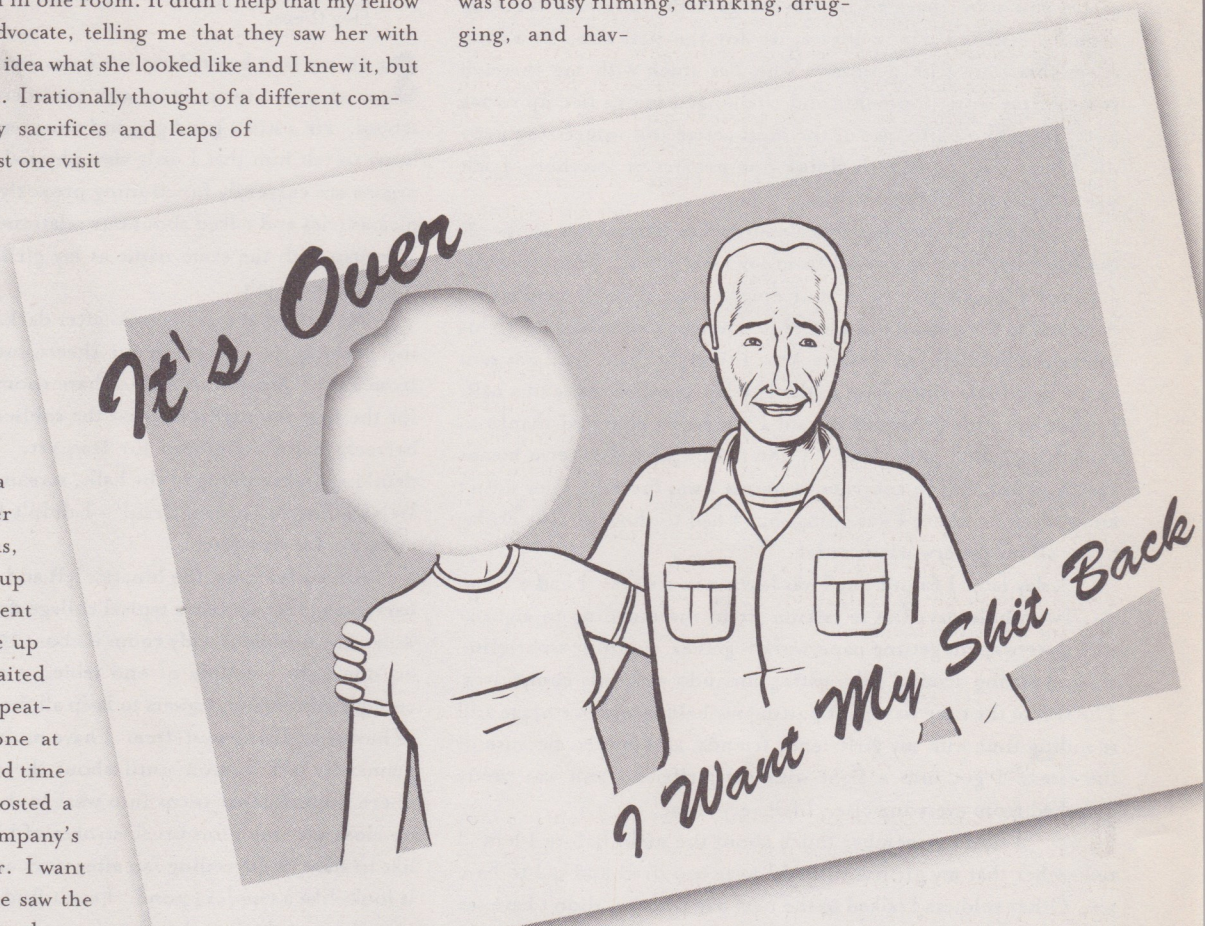
The only time we really had together was when we met for church (did I mention she was a Jesus freak?). No matter how much you love Jesus, it's not easy getting up after a Saturday night spent partying. She stood me up twice, and each time I waited for her for hours and repeatedly called the pay phone at her barracks. The second time she was a no-show, I posted a crude note on her company's bulletin board: "It's over. I want my shit back." Everyone saw the note before her. A friend came up to her and said she was so sorry about what happened. My girlfriend expressed confusion and she was lead to the note. It broke her heart.

If she were more experienced, she would have seen the break-up coming. If I were more experienced, I would not have written the letter. That's growing up. It's tough enough without a contractual agreement with the military-industrial complex.

Soon we were in the same school together and lived in the same building. I saw her every day and, each time, my stomach still did flips and blood rushed to my head. I felt sick all the time. I did childish things that I regret now: giving myself alcohol poisoning twice; stealing her car for alcohol fueled rage-drives on San Antonio's circuitous interstates; embarrassing her in public. I saw her date other guys. I saw her meet the man she later married and had a child with.

All this set me on a self-destructive course that went on for a few years. But at some point I realized that I couldn't blame her. All this negative energy came from something I felt inside.

Fast-forward to the spring of 2001; I was in my junior year of college and most of my time was spent on school film projects. The army was just a weekend a month for me after that first year and a half, but I couldn't even do that. I was too busy filming, drinking, drug-ging, and hav-



I JOINED THE ARMY BECAUSE I WAS IN LOVE WITH A GIRL AND SHE ENLISTED. I FOLLOWED HER, BELIEVING THAT SHE MIGHT BE MY ONLY CHANCE AT HAPPINESS. NEEDLESS TO SAY, SHE WASN'T AND I KNOW IT WAS A MISTAKE NOW. I KNEW IT THEN TOO, I THINK.

ing fun to show up to any of the weekend drills. I lost count of how many I missed. When I showed up for the two-week training in the summer, I was given money for a cab and a Greyhound ticket. I was no longer in the army, they told me. I had missed too many drills.

After a summer spent touring with friends' bands, I came home penniless and facing a terminated lease. I ended up homeless, living in my van for nine months. In those nine months, I learned that I could survive without a job or a home on two dollars a day (with a lot of help from friends and family). But I also learned

that I am not Aaron Cometbus and living scarce wasn't for me. So when I was told that my paperwork for separation from military service wasn't completed and that I was welcome back, I took them up on their offer.

Cut to this past January, my new life was dawning but not in a way that I had planned. I had just graduated from college and I had been on IRR (Inactive Ready Reserves—a two year period where you don't have to do anything) with the Army for four months. Also, I was in love again for the first time in a long time—this time with a woman who has stuck with me through some of my worst moments and challenged me to live up to my potential. She's also one of the most active and interesting people I have met, constantly doing one project or another. I felt like life was full of possibilities.

One day, while I was downloading Les Sexareenos songs off the Internet, I got an e-mail from my reserve unit. "Print out the attached file and give it to your employers," it read, cryptically. Attached to the e-mail was a letter to employers detailing my rights under the Soldiers and Sailors Act. I thought the e-mail was sent to me by mistake since I was in the IRR for another year and a half. I called my unit up and they said I was being activated thanks to something called "stop-loss." I don't know what that term means exactly either, but in this case, it meant I was fucked. They didn't know when or where I was going, but I had to show up that Friday to get all my paperwork in order.

A day later I found out I was leaving in a week. I had a lot to do. Two whole days (we're talking six in the morning to eight at night) were spent getting paperwork together, listening to briefings, and sitting around idly, eating menudo with mis compadres. The rest of the time was spent putting my belongings in storage and spending time with my girlfriend, friends, and family. Because of the stress, I got into a fight with my girlfriend and was pretty detached from everyone else. I felt very alone.

I don't remember much about the night before I left. I remember that my girlfriend and I were too tired and sad to have sex. Other soldiers I talked to the next day said they didn't have sex either. We were so worn down from preparing to leave that we just wanted to get where we were going and relax a little. That last night seems like a long time ago.

—TR

So:

Today everyone was watching TV in the breakroom while Colin Powell gave his briefing to the UN. It was quiet the whole time. One guy was videotaping the TV and then people's reactions, which were hardly evident. Everyone was very stoic, even me. I was thinking: *a bunch of smudgy pictures, so what?* Yeah, I want to believe that I am not being lied to, but can I afford to? Nobody seemed to be very gung-ho about this latest piece of info. When Powell started winding down, people silently went back to work one by one. There were few words spoken in the last hour.

Finally, master sergeant broke the silence. "Do you think Iraq has WMDs?" he asked a captain.

The captain stared at the TV for a second and answered, grimly, "They'd better."

—TR

Hey there,

So on my first bus ride to the base, I ended up sitting next to a guy who used to compete with me in cross-country during high school. He's still a good guy and runs regularly. I didn't have the heart to tell him that I only view physical fitness in terms of what organs are currently functioning properly. Instead, we exchanged pleasantries and talked about our relationships. He was married to a woman with the same name as my girlfriend—coincidences like that give me a jolt.

We arrived at our barracks after dark. We waited in the freezing parking lot to sign in for sheets and blankets thrown to us from a van. Most of us had to share rooms and sleep on the floor for the first few nights because the soldiers currently living in the barracks hadn't deployed for Iraq yet. Those guys were crazy—drinking and smoking in the halls, screaming things like, "Fuck it! We're going to fucking Iraq!" I didn't know if this was normal behavior for this place.

After a few days, the lunatics left and I got my own room. The barracks are set up like a typical college dorm. I share a bathroom with a guy next door. My room is about 15 square feet and has desk on one wall, a couple of end tables, a small walk-in closet and enough shelves and drawers to keep all the frivolous crap one tends to buy when living rent-free. I have multi-colored walls that start primarily dark salmon until about three feet from the ground where the wallpaper turns into what looks like beige TV static but up close are imitation brush strokes of blue, pink, and mauve. I like to stare at the ceiling fan after work and then look at the walls. It looks like a rippling pond. I can't find acid.

Do I need to say that there's not much to do here? I remember on our first weekend in Oklahoma, five of us went to a Pizza Hut that seemed to have been a renovated stable or car repair shop. Our server was slow and exuded self-pity. We all chewed and scowled at the squealing kids the next table over. It is a strange feeling to be with people the very same pissed-off mood as you for the exact same reasons. Normally, in the case of regular friends and acquaintances, one person is up and the other person is down. You don't go through that shared emotional experience unless you face something like a natural disaster together or get shipped off to some foreign locale like Oklahoma. That night in Pizza Hut wasn't much of a bonding experience—more like a collective menarche.

Not long after I got drunk with a bunch of guys one evening and ended up in the seediest strip club in town. I felt nausea and my jaw clenched—the usual *Clockwork Orange* effect strip clubs have on me. All the women looked like they just crawled out of their meth labs except for one girl who looked like she came truckin' in from

a R. Crumb comic. She took my cigarette out of my mouth as I walked through the door and started smoking it. We slunk over to the dark fringe off the main floor. A spine of desperation ran through the establishment. The strippers seemed to have a precarious kind of control over the crowd maintained by unconcealed hostility and very liberal rules of contact.

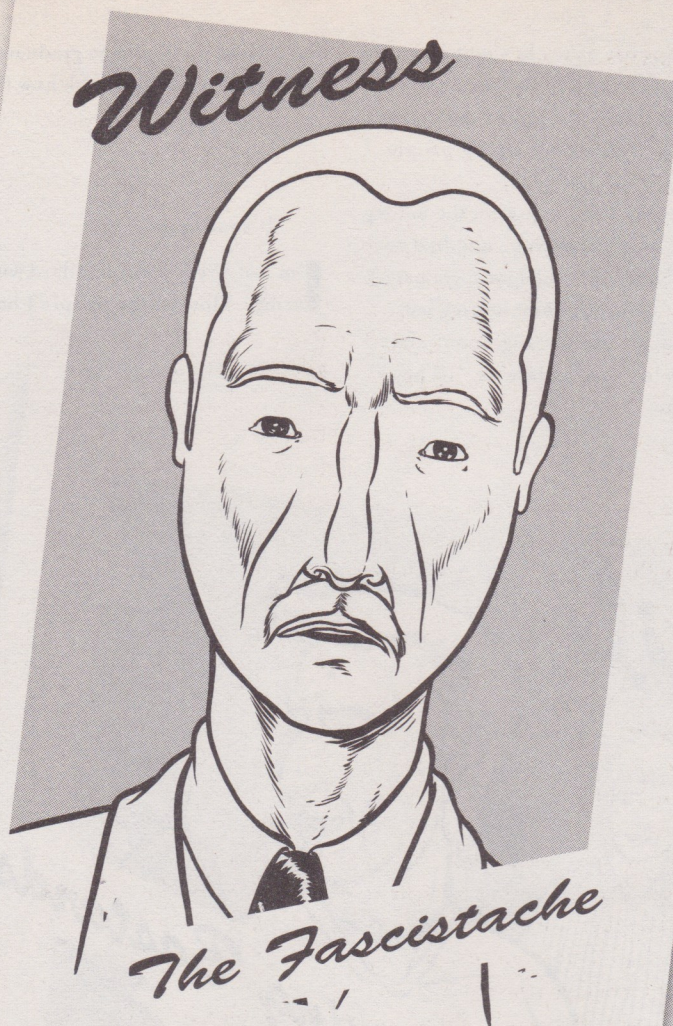
A Courtney Love type sat down by me and started slurring non-sequiturs. I just smiled and nodded my head. At one point I understood something she said: "What's that song that's like, 'I'm too sexy for this shirt, too sexy for this shirt?'" I told her it was Right Said Fred. "Bright Red Flare? OK, I'm gonna dance to that song." I never found out if she did, though. I left soon after.

—TR

Dear Sir or Madam—

My daily routine is vastly different from others' in the military. Most people get up around 0530 for PT and spend the next ten hours being treated like aberrant children by jug-eared Jesus freaks. I am smart and fortunate enough to avoid this kind of existence for the most part. My central philosophy is I'll do what I want because I don't give a fuck, and if they have any sense, they'll let my little transgressions slide, which they've done for the most part. I only went to PT twice. I slept in and was only chastised for ditching the mandatory dewy sweat-fuck a couple of times.

As you might expect, my philosophy hasn't kept me in the best of shape and I recently I failed a PT test. It was kind of a surprise, but I'm not worried. For some people, this would mean the end of their military career—thankfully, a military career just isn't in my cards.



I SEEMED TO HAVE MORE CONTROL IN THE WAITING ROOM AFTER I GREW A SMALL MOUSTACHE THAT I DUBBED "THE FASCISTACHE." THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO LIKE ME, BUT THEY HAD TO RESPECT THE 'STACHE. IT DEMANDED ORDER AND DISCIPLINE.

working there constantly watched you. Of course, that's pretty common in the military—people get their jollies from telling you that your bootlace is hanging out or that your sideburns aren't within regulation. They call them "on-the-spot corrections" and they're given in the spirit of helpin' a brother out. But let's be real here: The zeal behind this constant nitpicking among peers and superiors has an institutional rape foreplay aspect to it. It's in the glint in their eyes and their slight facial twitches.

Working in the audiology department was a sanctuary from that scene. It was quiet and the people who worked there were gen-

I've had three jobs since I've been here: a specimen processor, an audiologist's assistant, and an eyeglass maker-guy. When I worked as a specimen processor my routine went as follows:

0700-0745 Breakfast in the hospital

0800-1100 Accept bodily fluids from people and play Game Boy Advance with co-worker.

1100-1200 Lunch in the hospital

1200-1630 Sloshing urine and checking e-mail

1630-2230 Free time

The best part of being a specimen lab processor was talking to the nervous guys dropping off their sperm samples. They always asked how soon the results would come in.

I didn't like working at the hospital because the people

uinely friendly and kind. After a couple of weeks spent learning the job, I had to give hearing tests to all the people leaving for the Middle East. That made me uncomfortable and forced me to think about what I was doing in a new way. Instead of helping people, I helped place them in harm's way.

My job was to either give the hearing tests or control the waiting room. The latter was the hardest job. It entailed keeping a hundred people quiet, looking in their ears for wax build-up (I still have nightmares), and flipping through their medical records for previous hearing tests.

I seemed to have more control in the waiting room after I grew a small moustache that I dubbed "the fascistache." They didn't have to like me, but they had

for a white male college graduate in America. These are my prime subjugatin' years and look how they're being squandered.

—TR

It's me again—

I'm not a very good standard with which to measure the rest of the army. Most of the people I have met in the army remind me of

most of the people I knew in high school. They still drag race, chew Skoal, and spend their evenings drinking and trying to get laid. I have learned something about myself now that I am put in close contact with what most people would call "typical Americans."

Like Harry Dean Stanton said in *Repo Man*, "Ordinary fucking people—I hate 'em." All these friendly neighbors and family people who smile all day and whistle while they work are in fact terrible cowards that would allow every woman and child in the next town over to be raped if it meant not having to sacrifice comfort or stability on their part. Most people are evil self-serving bastards without a shred



to respect the 'stache. It demanded order and discipline. The moustache let them know I was serious and they kept it locked up. I had to shave it off eventually when it started to take control of my personality. I was becoming power hungry.

While conducting hearing tests, I read on the *Drudge Report* that American interrogators had killed two POWs during interrogation in Afghanistan. The article stirred up questions in me I didn't want to face: How far can this go before I cannot allow myself to be a part of it anymore? Where is that line? I decided that I could not keep up my ironic gung-ho façade.

Now I'm making eyeglasses. My morale is in the bottom of the trough and some days I just don't make it to work at all. When I do go, usually I'm high or hung-over. I perform menial tasks all day long—file down lenses, heat up frames and insert the lenses, clean the glasses. I feel like a 12-year-old girl in a sweatshop in Honduras. The money's better, but it's a totally unacceptable job

I USED TO THINK THE AMERICAN PEOPLE COULD SAVE THEMSELVES BEFORE IT WAS TOO LATE. NOW, I THINK I JUST NEED TO BE SAVED FROM THEM.

of dignity or decency left in them. You can show them any number of documentaries, articles, and testimonials tearing down their starry-eyed beliefs and replacing them with our nightmarish reality and they would just ooze an excuse through their tightly clenched smiles and take their earliest chance to escape from your vile liberal clutches. I used to think the American people could save themselves before it was too late. Now, I think I just need to be saved from them. These people don't need saving; they need to be stomped under our heels. We have worked hard and spent a lot of money to make them our intellectual inferiors. Now we should rule them from our ivory tower . . .

Wait—sorry about that. I didn't mean it. At least not all of it. I'm on an emotional rollercoaster right now and fascism is an emotion around here.

—TR

Here's what's up:

I missed my flight for a short morale-boosting visit home. I was an hour early, but I was waiting at the wrong gate. I guess I wasn't paying attention—just floating along. OK, the truth is that I was watching the last two episodes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* season three on my PowerBook. I was so engrossed that I didn't notice I was at the wrong gate until a half hour after my flight took off!

I had to wait six hours for the next flight. I called my girlfriend. She had planned an avant-garde film screening in honor of my arrival and I was going to miss it for no good reason. She was mad at me and I was mad at myself.

I killed most of my six hours at the bar. The bartender was an Asian woman with a thick accent—someone's war bride probably. Her son is in the 3rd Infantry, one of the first divisions expected to enter Baghdad. We watched CNN together—she called George Bush Sr. "the Daddy."

I watched in disgust as news-entertainers provided play-by-play in enthusiastic, career-boosting tones. The news was like a pre-game show: "Does Saddam have the D to quell Bush's 'shock and awe' offense? I think after the spanking Bush gave to the 'Graveyard of Empires,' we all know the answer to that question." MSNBC was the worst with their floor map and color-coded icons.

I left and went to the gift shop to purchase \$3 mints and flip through a Time magazine. The pictures showed American soldiers hidden behind goggles and scarves poised for attack on a sepia-toned Martian landscape. Is *anything* human about this war?

On the flight home, there was a contest to find the oldest penny on the plane. If you had it, you got an inflatable airplane. If I had felt like looking in my pockets, maybe I'd finally have something to go with my inflatable World Trade Center. The winner: a 1941 wheat penny.

When I got home, I was disturbed by the lack of change. My world had been totally flipped upside down—it didn't seem fair that all these patriotic warmongers could continue with their sad little lives. I wanted the bombs to drop there—let *them* get a hard dose of reality for a change. But that was only five minutes of interior monologue though. The rest of the trip was amazing—spent contently with my girlfriend. It made going back so much harder.

—TR

One last thing—

Well, what else can I tell you? Some half-remembered tales of us fellas sitting around complaining about our rotten luck? Or I could tell you about the shitty weather and the bad service in all the shitty restaurants in this cursed hell-town. Mostly, I

can tell you that this shit isn't over yet. In fact, the interesting part is just starting. We all knew we would blaze a char-broiled trail to the heart of Baghdad. We knew we were going to mix it up with the ragheads, pull down statues and raise Ol' Glory. Hot damn and we did, so what now? Me, I'm waiting for the other shoe to drop. Frankly, I don't know whether to brace myself for the impact or get the hell out of the way. I guess it all comes down to timing.

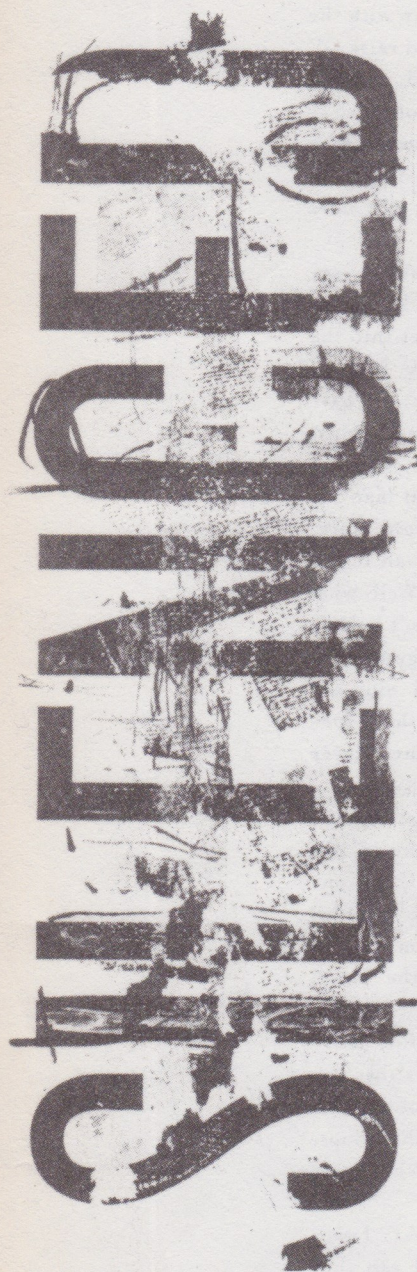
To be honest, all the above is secondary to the fact that people I know may read this. These letters may get into the wrong hands and cause trouble for me. No wonder I'm writing them. I have always had a desire to burn my bridges before I crossover to Babylon. Look at George W Bush: everything that man has done has been out of self-interest. Sure, he may be the most powerful man in the world now but in the end . . . Well, what *will* happen in the end? I don't believe in an afterlife or a final judgment, so maybe he's got it all figured out. Or maybe I've been losing so long that I forgot I'm engaged in the same power struggle as Bush.

As I come to a close with these letters, I enter a new grey little chapter in this uninspired saga. I'm going to Oklahoma City next week to study to be a phlebotomist the Oklahoman way. I'm going to be a marketing gimmick for the blood bank—a plasma pack mascot in fatigues. We're going to take blood from fine patriotic folks and give them stickers that say, "Thanks for supporting our troops." In reality, the blood isn't going to the troops, not the ones overseas anyway. Who knows where the blood goes?

I'm also studying for the LSAT. I want to study international law so I can slow these right-wing bastards down a bit. I know other people who are going into the same field. Film seemed like a good field when the economy was good and the Bill of Rights wasn't stored in the presidential lavatory. Now desperate times call for desperate measures.

Good luck and I'll see you all at Guantanamo Bay,

—TR ©



Most people have called in sick to work once or twice even though they were really at the beach or taking their kid to a ballgame. Such misreporting isn't usually the kind of thing that will get you fired or suspended.

But in March, *San Francisco Chronicle* technology reporter Henry Norr was suspended indefinitely for taking a sick day to attend an anti-war protest.

Norr was officially suspended for "falsifying his timecard" because he called in sick for the day he spent in jail after the protest, but Norr says the paper's true motivation is obvious.

"The fact that they nailed me on this silly sick day thing is an acknowledgement on their part that I didn't actually violate any ethics policy," he says, noting that he warned his editor ahead of time that he was going to the protest and planned to get arrested. Even though the paper's official policy explicitly states that—unlike at most news outlets—reporters are entitled to express their political views, and Norr's beat, technology, isn't directly related to the war, he feels he was punished for his anti-war views. Norr is just one of many reporters and news outlets—both large and small—to suffer serious consequences for holding and expressing critical opinions of the war in Iraq or the Bush administration's policies in the past few months.

In Chicago, long-time *Chicago Tribune* weekly columnist Salim Muwakkil had his column pulled for good in February after he turned in a submission comparing Bush's policies to Hitler's.

"Adolf Hitler justified the Nazi invasion and occupation of parts of Europe as a benign move to protect them from Britain's imperial tyranny," he wrote in his February 10th column, which was run

with significant alterations. "The Nazis called it *lebensraum*. We call it 'pre-emptive self-defense.'"

While the Tribune said Muwakkil's five-year run as a columnist was already longer than usual, a fact Muwakkil acknowledges, many thought the timing of his dismissal seemed way too coincidental.

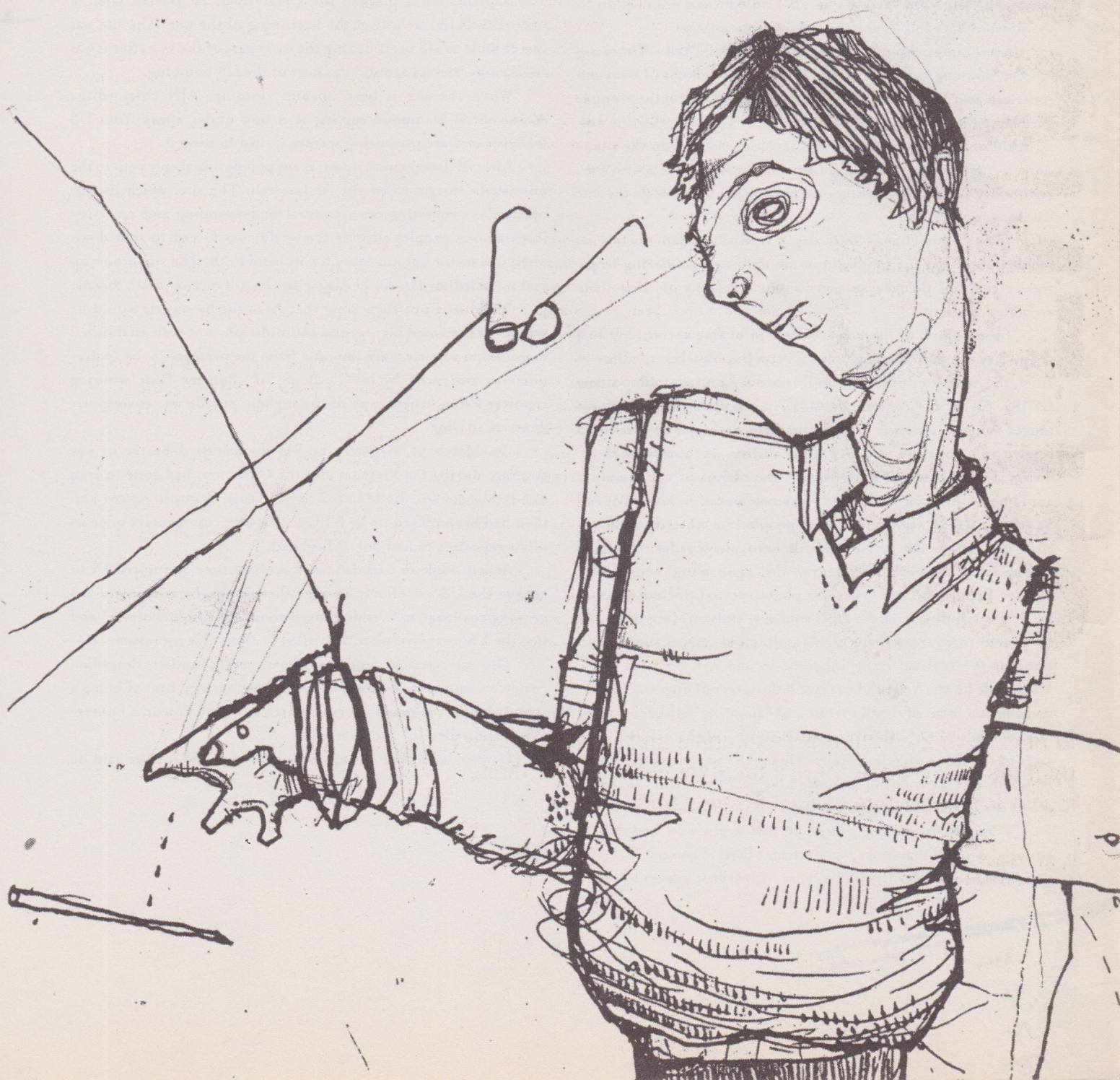
"The tradition had been to only keep rotating columnists on for a year and I was there for five," says Muwakkil. "I know they have been under pressure by various groups—particularly Jewish groups, who had problems with the Trib's coverage of Israel in general. My writing exacerbated that and they still supported me, so it would be difficult for me to claim I'm being censored now. But I do think there was some discomfort with my relentless anti-war views."

Muwakkil says he was upset that Tribune editors didn't consult him before significantly altering his column. A Tribune editor told the *Chicago Reader* weekly that the edits were made because Muwakkil had misused the term "lebensraum."

Muwakkil's situation parallels that of CBS producer Ed Gernon, who was fired in mid-April after comparing the current climate of fear and patriotism in the US to the early days of Hitler's

In the age of 24-hour news channels and instant Internet updates, you'd think there'd be room in the mainstream media for dissenting voices. Think again.

By Kari Lydersen
illustration by Nick Butcher



reign during an interview with *TV Guide* about his upcoming miniseries chronicling Hitler's rise to power.

"It basically boils down to an entire nation gripped by fear, who ultimately chose to give up their civil rights and plunged the whole world into war," Gernon explained to *TV Guide*. "I can't think of a better time to examine this history than now."

The interview was trumpeted in other media as an example of CBS's "anti-Americanism".

With broadcast and print media increasingly consolidated into huge corporations, the Internet is often seen as a last bastion of free speech and democratic expression.

But Internet news sites are also ripe for censorship since they are usually hosted by servers who have no editorial connection to the site and have full legal right to terminate service.

In just one example, Erich Marquardt's website *YellowTimes.org* was shut down by its hosting company for posting photos of Iraqi and American casualties of war. The server pulled the site on the grounds that the photos constituted "adult material." The site, which is now up again on a different server, also includes sections on the situations in Afghanistan, Asia, and Latin America, complete with foreign policy analysis, including commentary on the damage the war has done to the UN.

While *YellowTimes*'s host was a relatively small operation, media pundits say the implications are chilling considering larger servers can and do take an equally active role in policing their members' content.

"People think of the web as a bastion of free speech, but this shows they can pull the plug on you," says Jim Naureckas, editor of *Extra!*, the newsletter of the group Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR). "What if ComCast or AOLTime/Warner decide they no longer want any anti-war views going through their wires? It could really put a crimp in people's ability to communicate." *Yellow Times*' Marquardt argues that the photos of war casualties aren't necessarily political or anti-war statements, because they can be taken various ways by different people. He notes that shortly after he put up the photos, which were downloaded from the Qatar-based network Al-Jazeera, the right-wing website the Drudge Report also had gruesome photos posted, including smiling Iraqis standing over dead US soldiers' bodies. Marquardt said he wanted to counter these highly politicized images with depictions of the real suffering inherent in the war on both sides. Meanwhile he says *YellowTimes* is still the target of ongoing harassment in the form of death threats and "spoofing"—the sending of mass e-mails often with viruses attached or with hate-filled messages in the name of *YellowTimes*. He said he was the subject of an especially intense spoofing campaign last fall because of his coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"I logged on to the computer one night and had 7,000 bounced e-mails that looked as if we sent them," he says.

Marquardt notes that these types of Internet attacks by inde-

pendent operators can be just as effective as official censorship in silencing Internet pundits.

"Hacking and death threats are really an issue, especially for smaller publications where one individual runs it in his spare time and isn't ready to handle it," he says.

Similar attacks plagued the Qatar-based Al Jazeera satellite network's (AJN) website at the beginning of the war. The site was inaccessible to US users during the early part of the war after it was attacked by hackers around the start of the US bombing.

While the site is back up and running, AJN chief editor Abdulaziz Al Mahmoud reports it is now under attack from US lobbyists who are pressuring servers against hosting it.

After Al-Jazeera went down, many people mistakenly went to the unrelated Georgia-based site Al-Jazeerah. The site, which lists its mission as promoting cross-cultural understanding and non-violence among peoples all over the world, was forced to shut down when web traffic got too heavy for its bandwidth. The site is now up again, but editor Hassan El-Najjar says he still receives death threats.

While it is not surprising that Arab media outlets would be subject to increased bigotry and intimidation, not even established mainstream reporters are immune from the pressure to be "patriotic"—as evidenced by NBC's firing of Pulitzer Prize winning reporter Peter Arnett, one of the highest-profile war correspondents of all time.

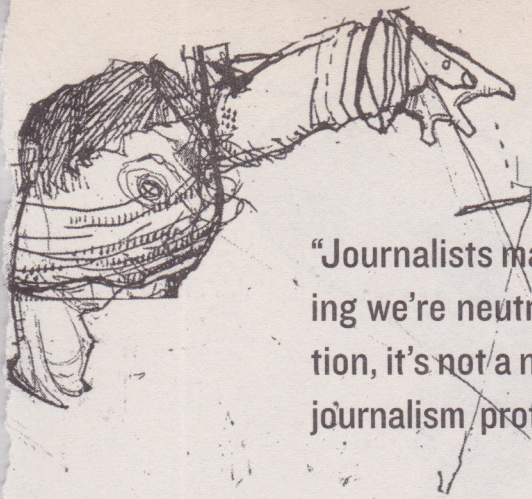
On March 31, Arnett, who was the standard-bearer of war coverage during the Vietnam and the Gulf wars, had gone to Iraq as a freelancer for the MSNBC show *National Geographic Explorer* and then had been picked up by NBC for regular commentary once its other reporters pulled out of Baghdad.

Arnett, while in Baghdad, went on Iraqi state-sponsored TV to analyze the US war effort; among other things, he said "there is a growing challenge to President Bush about the conduct of war" and that the US's original plan "has failed because of Iraqi resistance."

The government and countless media outlets described Arnett's comments as virtual treason. They accused him of being a "conduit of propaganda" during Vietnam, where he won a Pulitzer Prize, and called for his dismissal.

Despite later apologizing for a lack of judgment (he said he

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"Journalists make the claim of being neutral, but you have journalists saying we're neutral and we're patriotic . . . yet patriotism is a political position, it's not a neutral position. You can't be both." says University of Texas journalism professor Robert Jensen, author of the book *Writing Dissent*

did the interview out of "professional courtesy"), Arnett was fired by NBC and MSNBC, and almost as quickly picked up by London's *Daily Mirror*, which had fewer qualms about criticizing a war largely opposed by the British people.

"If [Arnett] had gone on Iraqi TV and given the Pentagon's line, he wouldn't have been in trouble," says FAIR's Naureckas. "But he went on and answered questions honestly instead of acting like a Pentagon spokesman."

It's been a busy year for firings at MSNBC—they also dumped talk show host Phil Donahue earlier this year because his leftist, anti-war leanings were not in keeping with the patriotic climate, according to internal memos leaked to the press. Media critics note that while journalists are supposed to maintain a standard of objectivity, much of the public has been convinced that "objective" equates to "patriotic," when in fact it is just the opposite.

"Journalists make the claim of being neutral, but you have journalists saying we're neutral and we're patriotic," says University of Texas journalism professor Robert Jensen, author of the book *Writing Dissent*. "Yet patriotism is a political position, it's not a neutral position. You can't be both." Right-wing and pro-administration journalists seem to be under no such pressure to be "objective." For example just as it was ousting Donahue, MSNBC awarded a show to right-wing shock jock Michael Savage, who among other things had referred to urban gunfire victims as "ghetto slime."

But even patriotism didn't save sensational Fox News reporter Geraldo Rivera from getting booted out of Iraq. At the same time Arnett was fired, Rivera was forced by the US military to "voluntarily" leave Iraq after he allegedly revealed sensitive information on TV. While Rivera's coverage was gung-ho pro-military and anti-Saddam Hussein, his ouster was another example of the US government being unwilling to tolerate coverage not approved by the administration.

Media critics note that government control and self-censor-

ship of reports from Iraq are especially strong in the broadcast medium, which is where the majority of the public are getting their news about the war. This is due to TV's sound-bite, image-driven nature, which lends itself to "with-us-or-against-us" conclusions rather than complex analysis, as well as to the feverish competition for ratings. Laura Miller, an analyst at PR Watch, notes that while networks are cutting back on their advertising during war time, they are also using this crisis as a way to build loyal viewers for the future.

"CNN was made by reporting from the first Gulf War," says Miller. "You look at how each of the networks is designing their 'War in Iraq' logos, their music and graphics—they put a lot of time and money into this to make it as catchy as possible. It's a ratings battle going on—that's one reason why they're sniping at each other."

While the list of journalists actually fired or suspended for their political views is still relatively short, there is doubtless a wide ripple effect from these retributions. Particularly in this tight job market, journalists are more likely to be wary of the possible consequences of what they write, even if it is the truth. "This is more a system that rewards those who comply than punishes those who don't," says Jensen. "There are only a couple dramatic cases where people were punished, but it doesn't take many demonstration cases to scare people away, especially in this affluent society where we like our toys. The rewards the system offers are quite tangible, so it's like if you play the game you'll get this; if you don't, you just might get that."

Norr thinks his suspension was clearly meant as a message to the rest of the newsroom.

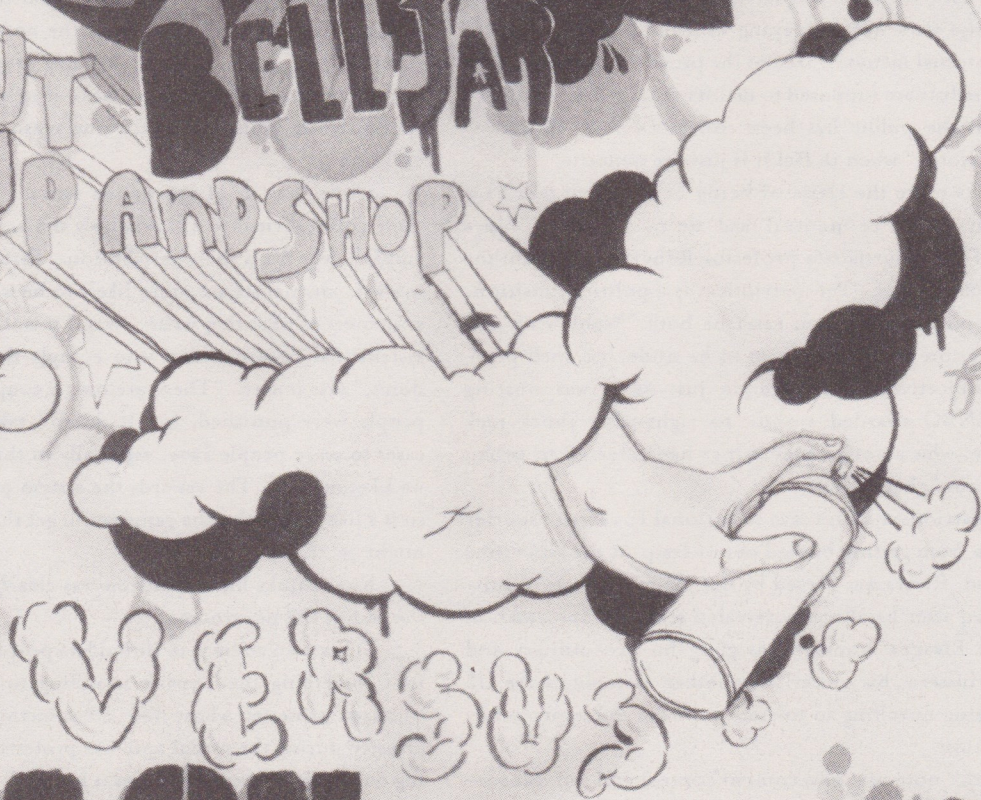
"This is an attempt to intimidate people, to let them know this isn't something the *Chronicle* is willing to tolerate," says Norr, a Vietnam protester whose two 20-something daughters were also arrested during the recent anti-war protests. "That's why I'm speaking out about it, even if it makes it less likely I'll get my job back." ©

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MIND

JAM IT

SHOT UP BELL JAR

MELBOURNE
CITY COUNCIL
DESIGNATED
GRAFFITI ZONE



fuck the buff!

RAGE

**MEIBOURNE
CITY
COUNCIL**

It's midnight on Monday and I'm walking the streets of Melbourne, Australia with a couple of criminals: Jam It and the Bell Jar. Jam It flattens a blackened hand against a clean grey wall, bites her bottom lip, and squints as a steady stream of paint fills the holes in her stencil. She peels it carefully away, and takes a step back to read her handiwork: "Melbourne City Council Designated Graffiti Zone."

She turns to Bell Jar and nods at the wall across the alley. The night is young, and as they do every week, they have a lot of ground to cover. Jam It and Bell Jar stick to a strict schedule. Their work will be gone by Wednesday, and the two will have start all over again, like a couple of modern day Sisyphus'.

It's been this way since last November when the Residents Against Graffiti Everywhere—RAGE for short—pressured the Melbourne City Council to crack down on graffiti artists and wipe the walls clean from Albert Park to Clifton Hill.

The group has been lobbying the city for years to get rid of graffiti and catch the perpetrators. Much like the anti-graffiti rhetoric spouted by big-city mayors here in the US, like New York's Rudy Giuliani and Chicago's Richy Daley who also frittered away millions in taxpayers' money to whitewash city walls, RAGE blames graffiti for reduced property values and increased crime rates. They claim this despite the fact that studies have shown that erasing graffiti from neighborhood walls has no significant effect on the crime rates in the area that surrounds it.

Now that the City Council finally gave in and began to pour money into the effort, police keep their eye out for suspicious kids day and night, the courts inflict heavy fines on taggers, and the city offers subsidies for private business owners who clean up the graffiti themselves.

Jam It and the Bell Jar say it's wrong to make laws dictating the way their city looks. "I think that most laws should be defined according to how much they hurt people—emotionally or physically," says Jam It. "These people who are objecting to graffiti—you're talking about space which everyone pays taxes on—they're doing it because they and their friends and customers don't think it looks good. But that's *their* problem, not mine. When I see graffiti I don't think 'Eew that disgusting.' I think 'That's funny', or 'How long did that take', or 'Gee so and so has been busy this week.'"

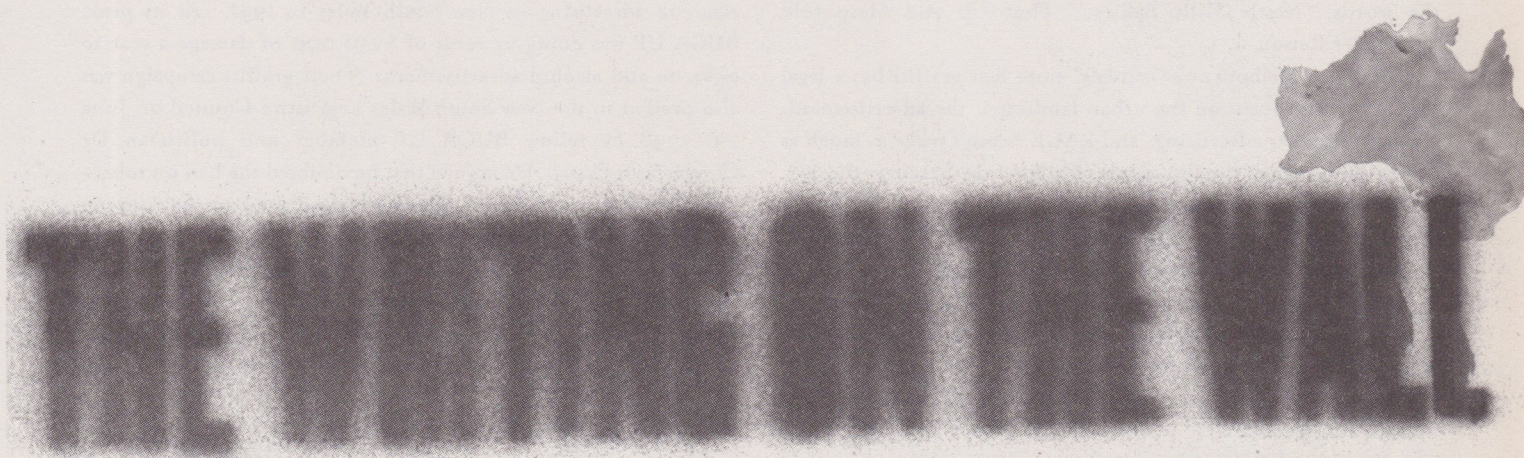
The Bell Jar shakes the can in her hand and sprays a test squiggle onto the side of a metal trashcan. She cocks her head to the side and says, "You need to be really patient and neat to make a good stencil, and I'm just too messy." She sounds frustrated. The wall above her head now reads, "DRIVING MAKES YOU FAT," but the letters are bleeding, fresh paint trickling down the grey bricks onto the pavement.

Jam It looks over. "You need to hold the can further away from the wall," she calls.

"Oh yeah," says Bell Jar, perking up and heading for the next blank wall.

RAGE, the government, and the police force call them vandals and hooligans; but Jam It says she's an artist Bell Jar is an author. They have a message they want to get out there—and they're not alone. Melbourne is teeming with graffiti artists. Many of them didn't start out that way, they stumbled upon it while they were looking for the effective outlet for political dissent.

Bonnie Renou, who is writing a dissertation on political graffiti at Melbourne University, says that graffiti is "an essential mean of communication for the oppressed." But, she warns that "soci-



Facing tough new anti-vandalism laws, have Melbourne, Australia's political graffiti writers painted themselves into a corner?

By Jessica Markham
illustration by Sayre Gomez



"society likes it when streets are straight, trains run on time, cars are clean, dishes are in their place and footpaths are swept free of leaves. The disorderly and often impulsive nature of graffiti just runs against all that."

ety likes it when streets are straight, trains run on time, cars are clean, dishes are in their place and footpaths are swept free of leaves. The disorderly and often impulsive nature of graffiti just runs against all that."

Contrary to RAGE's claim that graffiti is just a vain attempt to assert individual identity that destroys public property, graffiti in Melbourne often expresses cogent messages that represent the full spectrum of political thought. You may see a swastika while walking down one treet, and think "fuck that," and then turn a corner and read, "MAKE AWKWARD ADVANCES TOWARD WOMEN, NOT WAR" scrawled in quick, jagged handwriting.

Regardless, RAGE insists that it's all the same: vandalism, pure and simple. But there are very few alternatives for young people to reach so many people. "With graffiti all you need is a spray can and a little bit of nerve to get your opinion out to the public—that's freedom of speech," explains graffiti writer Sarah Conner.

The Bell Jar's favorite graffitist, and winner of the Activism in Arts Award 1999, Shut Up and Shop, scrawled his famous "INVEST IN FEAR" outside insurance agencies throughout the city. "I graffiti because no mainstream media outlet will write the words, 'Nestle Kills Babies,'" Shut Up and Shop told researcher Renou.

Many of Melbourne's "vandals" note that graffiti has a legal identical twin cousin on the urban landscape: the advertisement. The law supports advertising, and RAGE doesn't make as much as a peep about any of the thousands of billboards that litter the city. Renou contends that the anti-graffiti movement doesn't threaten advertiserments because "the law tends to reflect the interests of those in power at the expense of the marginalised."

In fact, the line between graffiti and advertising blurred even more when Sony started using footpath graffiti stencils to promote its products, and the City of Melbourne not only turned its back, it joined in, plastering sidewalks and city walls with ads for local festivals and sponsors.

Meg Mundell of Melbourne's *Big Issue* magazine investigated corporate street graffiti. She discovered that the council didn't fine the corporations responsible for the graffiti, even though they neglected to get permits from the city. "What's the underlying message?" Mundell concludes. "That's it's OK to make a buck by tapping to a youth market via a 'hip' form of renegade media—but

if that same youth market uses that form of media themselves, they're branded vandals and criminals?"

A few years ago, socially conscious graffiti writers began a full frontal assault on advertisements in their cities. The culture jamming group BUGA UP (that's Billboard Utilising Graffitiists Against Unhealthy Promotions) describes billboard defacing on its website as an ethical method for those without corporate resources to challenge the unethical promotion of useless or harmful products. Since its inception in 1980, BUGA UP has been vandalising tobacco and alcohol billboards on government property in an attempt to reeducate the public about these harmful drugs and mass consumption in general. BUGA UP describes the outdoor advertising industry in much the say way as RAGE defines graffiti, arguing "that the industry is totally insensitive to the environment. The advertising industry has no compunction whatsoever about ruthlessly marring our beautiful countryside with ugly billboards and hoardings."

BUGA UP member PK feels that the damage he does to property is essential to his message. PK believes that modifying billboards was a key factor that led to the eventual ban on billboard cigarette advertising in New South Wales in 1991. At its peak, BUGA UP was doing upwards of \$250,000 of damage a year to cigarette and alcohol advertisements. Their graffiti campaign was also praised in the New South Wales Legislative Council on June 29, 1998 by fellow BUGA UP member and politician Dr Chesterfield Evans. He argued that he doubted the ban on tobacco advertising would have happened had he stuck to the conventional political process.

The graffiti war rages on in Melbourne, Australia. Every week Jam It and the Bell Jar hit the streets ready to do some redecorating. Jam It gives her can a quick shake and says, "They covered my graffiti with their paint, so I have every right to cover their paint with my graffiti."

Who will win? What are the costs? That's a risk they're willing to take. Why should the walls stay clean when there's so much bullshit going on? The world is full of dirty money and dirty politics—argue graffiti writers like Jam It and Bell Jar—and they're concerned about it keeping the walls clean? So until things get better, it's open season—you've entered a "Melbourne City Designated Graffiti Zone." ©

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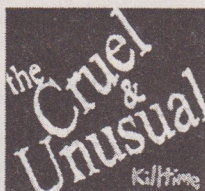


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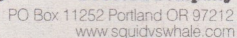


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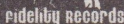
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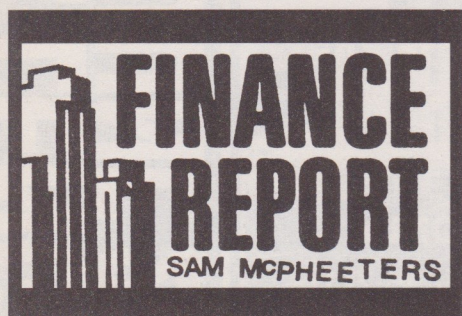
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al burien



CRUMMY DOINGS

It seems strange that only a year ago, facing war against the Taliban, I actually found

myself pining for the black and white simplicity of the first Gulf War. I am wondering when I will start to employ some foresight. The aughties are shaping up to be for international politics what the nineties were to personal finance—a drastic spike on the public learning curve. There are far more shades of gray these days. When, in February 1991, Christopher Hitchens deftly humiliated Charlton Heston live on CNN (Hitchens; “It’s not every day that one gets the chance to debate the Middle East with Moses himself. Let me ask a question of Mr. Heston. Can he tell me clockwise what countries have frontiers and borders with Iraq, starting with Kuwait?”) the moment was a personal thunderbolt, a revelation on the leverage offered by doing one’s homework.

In 2003, the same players return in miniature. This decade Heston only had to travel to his living room to be humiliated by Michael Moore, and the result was cheerless, the bullying of a weak, old man by a smug slob. Hitchens, meanwhile, has made a stunning political backflip bellyflop, blustering his way into a showy defense of Bush’s foreign policy. When he left *The Nation* after two decades as a columnist last year, ‘Hitch’ cited a strong rationale for armed action against the Baathist state, a plea rooted in impassioned exasperation. Although I didn’t agree with his conclusions, I appreciated his level of thought. Within six months, however, he was appearing with the Darth Vader of radical left / radical right conversion David Horowitz at a private conservative fundraiser in L.A.

Hitchens’ defection has gotten a lot of press, but as far as I’m concerned the only loser is the magazine he wrote for. *The Nation*’s remaining columnists are a lot like magazine columnists anywhere—well intentioned, articulate people whose writing is

informed by the fairly ordinary lives they lead (for the magazine I’m writing for, one would just substitute “touring” for “job”). In contrast, Hitchens frequently had bylines from unpronounceable Balkan villages and personal connections to key players in Middle Eastern affairs that, if not real, were so skillfully faked it didn’t really matter. Oddly, Hitchens’ departure also served as mirror to Art Spiegelman’s resignation from *The New Yorker*, who jumped ship earlier this year on the grounds that the magazine wasn’t left enough (and, perhaps, that its editors didn’t allow him to smoke). There is an irony to these two defections—the breezy literary magazine had a larger impact on this war than the staunch political journal. A March *New Yorker* article outed White House guru Richard Perle for profiteering off the conflict he himself helped create. A week later Perle improbably resigned from the powerful Defense Policy Board. Reading of this rare humiliation of one of the war’s architects, it occurred to me that this was the exact type of protest that I wanted to get involved with—Big Leverage stuff.

Of course I’m not going to get many of those opportunities in my lifetime. For every pre-flip Chris Hitchens (or Jon Strange, who similarly blasted Madeline Albright in ‘98) with the opportunity and presence of mind to ambush the powerful, there are 10,000 people like me who can either march uselessly or write futile letters or sit around whistling with their thumbs up their asses. Protest during war is an act of gesture, not results. I understand the function of street protests as expressions for basic outrage, as a means of ensuring that foreigners don’t mistake America for Americans (as Baseball Hat Guy from Propagandhi incredibly managed to do, in this magazine, only two issues ago). Beyond that it gets murky. After March 20, it was hard for me to justify even going to the marches. Once underway, war’s unstoppable momentum is not just a matter of politics. It’s a matter of logistics, of physics. With apologies to the Russian Revolution, war can’t be recalled any more than a space shuttle can be brought back to the launch pad a second after liftoff.

This is an important point, one I don’t think many Americans understand. For people my age or younger, there is a very real

belief that war can be stopped by protest. The specific myth that protest stopped the Vietnam war dead in its tracks has a sanctity that approaches scripture. But it just ain't so. The combatants of Chicago during the summer of '68, awash in their own historical importance, would certainly have been dumfounded to learn that it would take another *seven years* (and an estimated half million US and Vietnamese lives) for the war to grind to a halt. The antiwar movement was wildly successful in almost every arena except the one it was named for.

Ex-SDS head and current antiwar activist Todd Gitlin blasts this fiction in his terrific book, *The Sixties: Years Of Hope, Days Of Rage*. What he calls the "inauspicious paradox of the late '60s" is still very real in the new century. "As the [Vietnam] war became less popular," said Gitlin only last month, "so did the antiwar movement. In fact the antiwar movement was hated. That had huge political implications. It basically dismantled the political advantages that had accrued to the antiwar movement and left the left isolated." Of course not everyone agrees with him. And some find his conclusions too defeatist (or depressing) to seriously consider. Even though I agree with the guy, I find his conclusions defeatist and depressing. Where does that leave the millions of Americans who opposed this current war? What actions *will* make a difference?

Curious on this point, I made a list of protest actions I took during the first Gulf War, to see if any bore repeating:

- 1) Attended a handful of marches in DC and Times Square.
- 2) Wrote several fanzine articles with a depraved indifference to spelling and font niceness.
- 3) Drove past various pro-war sidewalk rallies and yelled things like "can you tell me clockwise what countries have frontiers and borders with Iraq, starting with Kuwait!?"
- 4) Called Ian MacKaye to ask if he would be interested in splitting the cost of a rather expensive quarter page anti-war ad in the *New York Times* op-ed section. Although the ad would have reached 1.2 million readers, I had neglected, in my excitement, to ponder exactly what the ad would have read. Sales people refer

to this approach as "cold calling" and the memory stirs such deep embarrassment that I have to wonder why I'm including it in this column. (although I know now what had escaped me then, that moderate exposure to screwballs is the price of an accessible public persona. Thomas Jefferson, tolerant of all petitioners, probably dealt with his share of enraged juniper farmers. Likewise, SF mayor Willie Brown, whose phone number is published, still suffers the occasional 2am phone call over busted streetlights.)

5) Disabled ATM screens with large stickers declaring "No Business As Usual" in the same ugly font I set all my zines in. This last item makes me sad. Those bank machines hadn't hurt anybody. I don't think a single one of them had a hand in U.S. foreign policy. Did I really believe that all users of bank machines were pro-war, or needed to be "woken up"? Since I myself enjoyed the banking convenience of ATMs (with the bankcard I shrewdly used to access the very same surveillance-heavy vestibules I would be defacing), I'm curious what this made me in the grand scheme of things.

"No Business As Usual" has a seductive logic all its own. To someone young enough to lack historical perspective, these four little words are the PIN code to all sorts of crummy doings. Only since Seattle '99—an event, for me, as remote as either Gulf War—have I understood what spectacularly bad politics are involved in this approach. For every intersection locked down in the name of "educating" the working class about US foreign policy, there are 50 people prevented from getting to their jobs. What core percentage of that group will, in its bitter frustration, tune out the benefits of a healthy, activist democracy? Actions are taken in DC, in New York, in Los Angeles. Bridges are blocked to make sure that average folks don't "ignore what's happening in Iraq." But does anyone reading this think that's even possible at this point? Do you, dear reader, know of anyone left in this country that hadn't spent the first two weeks of April in a state of deep anxiety? It is so wrong to admit that you don't have even the tiniest inkling of how to affect change, even if it is just to yourself?



EMO: WHERE THE GIRLS AREN'T

A few months back, I was at a Strike Anywhere show. The band launched into "Refusal"; a

song offering solidarity with the feminist movement and bearing witness to the inherent struggle in women's lives. It is not a song of protection; there is no romantic undertow. It's a song about all people being equally important. Everyone was dancing, fanboys and girls at the lip of the stage screaming along—like so many shows at the Fireside. By the first chorus of the song, I was in tears. I have often been so moved to shed small wet tears at Strike shows, but this time was for AN entirely different reason—A mournful new awareness: *I am here, at the Fireside Bowl probably 75 times a year for the last five years. The numbers of times I have genuinely felt, or even sensed my reality or the reality of the women I know portrayed in a song sung by male-fronted band—that number was at zero and holding.* The ratio of songs/shows/expressed sentiment-to-affirmation of feminist struggle/girlhood is staggering. This song was the first.

No wonder most of my girlfriends and I have been growing increasingly alienated and distanced from our varying scenes, or have begun taking shelter from emo's pervasive stronghold in the cave-like recesses of electronic, DJ or experimental music. No wonder girls I know are feeling dismissive and faithless towards music. No wonder I feel much more internal allegiance to MOP songs, as their tales of hood drama and jewelry theft FEELS far less offensive than yet another song from yet another all dude band giving us the 411 on his personal romantic holocaust. Because in 2003, as it stands, I simply cannot conjure the effort it takes to give a flying fuck about bands of boys yoked to their own wounding AKA the genre/plague that we know as E-M-O. Songs and scenes populated with myopic worldviews that do not extend beyond their velvet-lined rebel-trauma, their bodies, or their vans. Meanwhile, we're left wondering *how did we get here?*

As hardcore and political punk's charged sentiments became more cliché towards the end of the '80s—as we all soon settled in to the armchair comfort of the Clinton era—Punk began stripping off its tuff skin and getting down to its squishy pulp heart. Forget bombs and the real impact of trickle down economics, it's all about elusive kisses and tender-yet-undeniably-masculine emotional outbursts. Mixtapes across America became soiled with torrential anthems of hopeful boy hearts masted to sleeves, pillows soaked in tears, and relational eulogies. Romance of the self was on.

I think somewhere right around the release of the last Braid record, is where we lost the map. Up until then, things seemed reasonable, encouraging, exciting—thus far we were sold on vulnerability, there was something revivifying in the earnestness. New bands cast their entire micro-careers from bands we all liked:

Jawbox, Jawbreaker, Sunny Day Real Estate etc. In those bands, there were songs about women, but they were girls with names, with details to their lives, girls who weren't exclusively defined by their absence or lensed through romantic-spectre. Jawbox's most popular song, "Savory" was about recognizing male normative privilege, about the weight of sexualization on a woman ("see you feign surprise / that I'm all eyes"). In Jawbreaker songs women had leverage, had life, had animus and agency to them. Sometimes they were friends, or a sister, not always *girl to be bedded or pursued or dumped by*. They were accurate, and touched by reality.

And then something broke—And it wasn't Bob Nanna's or Mr. Dashboard's sensitive hearts. Records by a legion of done-wrong boys lined the record store shelves. Every record was a concept album about a breakup, damning the girl on the other side. Emo's contentious monologue—it's balled fist Peter Pan mash-note dilemmas—it's album length letters from pussy-jail—it's cathedral building in ode to man-pain and Robert-Bly-isms—it's woman-induced misery has gone from being *descriptive* to being *prescriptive*. Emo was just another forum where women were locked in a stasis of outside observation, observing ourselves through the eyes of others. The prevalence of these bands, the omni-presence of emo's sweeping sound and its growing stronghold in the media and on the Billboard chart *codified* emo as A SOUND, where previously there had been diversity.

Girls in emo songs today do not have names. We are not identified. Our lives, our struggles, our day-to-day-to-day does not exist, we do not get colored in. We span from coquettish to damned and back again. We leave bruises on boy-hearts, but make no other mark. Our existences, our actions are portrayed SOLELY through the detailing of neurotic self-entanglements of the boy singer—our region of personal power, simply, is our breadth of impact on his romantic life. We are on a short leash in a filthy yard—we are mysteries to be unlocked, bodies to be groped, minimum wage earners of fealty, harvesters of sorrow, repositories for scorn. Vessels redeemed in the light of boy-love. On a pedestal, on our backs. Muses at best. Cum rags or invisible at worst. Check out our pictures on the covers of records—we are sad-eyed and winsome and well cleaved—Thank you Hot Rod Circuit, The Crush, Cursive, Something Corporate—the fantasy girl you could take home and comfort.

It is a genre made by and for adolescent and post adolescent boys, who make evident, in their lyrics and dominant aesthetic that their knowledge of actual living, breathing women is tiny enough to fit in a shoebox. Emo's characteristic sensitive front is limited to self-sensitivity, it runs in a fanciful maze of reflexive self pity, rife with a vulnerability that is infinitely self-serving. It is a high stakes game of control—of "winning" or "losing" possession of the girl (see Dashboard Confessional, Brand New, New Found Glory and Glassjaw albums for prime examples) Yet, in the vulnerability there is no empathy, no peerage or parallelism. Emo's yearning is not to identify with, or understand, but rather to enforce sexual hierarchy and omit women's power via romanticide.

As Andy Greenwald notes in his forthcoming book about emo culture *Nothing Feels Good: punk rock, teenagers, and emo*, lyrically, emo singers "revel in their misery and suffering to an almost ecstatic degree, but with a limited use of subtlety and language. It tends to come off like Rimbaud relocated to the Food Court." Women in emo songs are denied the dignity of humanization through both the language and narratives, we are omnipresent, but our only consequence is in romantic setting; denying any possibility or hope for life outside the margins, where they express a free sexual, creative or political will.

• • •

On a dancefloor in Seattle, a boy I know decides to plumb the topic,

"I heard you're writing a column about how emo is sexist"

"I am."

"What do you mean 'emo is sexist?'" Emo songs are no different than all of rock history, than Rolling Stones or Led Zeppelin."

"I know—I'd rather not get into right now."

"How are songs about breaking up sexist though? Everyone breaks up. If you have a problem with emo, you have a problem with all of rock history!"

"I know. I do."

And to paraphrase words of Nixon sidekick HR Haldeman, "History is wack."

There must be some discussion, at least for context, about the well-worn narrative of *the travails of the boy rebel's broken heart* as exemplified in the last 50 years of blues-based music. There must be some base acknowledgement that in almost every band since the beginning of time, most songs are about loving and losing women. Granted, broken hearts are a part of human existence. Songs about women but not written by women, practically define rock n roll. And as a woman, as a music critic, as someone who lives and dies for music, there is a rift within, a struggle of how much deference you will allow, and how much you will ignore *because you like the music*.

Can you ignore the lyrical content of the Stones "Under my Thumb" because you like the song? Are you willing to? How much attention can you sacrifice to the cock-prance of Led Zeppelin or cheesy humpa-humpa metaphors of AC/DC or the heaping pile of dead or brutalized women that amasses in Big Black's discography? Is emo exceptional in the scope of the rock canon in terms of treatment of women or in it's continual rubbing salt to it's own trouble-boy cliché image? Is there anything that separates Dashboard Confessional's condemnation of his bedhopping betrayer and makes it any more damning than any woman/mother/whore/ex-girlfriend showing up in songs of Jane's Addiction, Nick Cave, The Animals or Justin Timberlake? Can you compartmentalize and not judge the woe towards women readily exemplified in most of the recorded catalog of Zeppelin because the first eight bars of "Communication Breakdown" is, as the parlance goes, total fucking godhead? Where do you split? Do you bother to even care, because if yr going to try and kick against it, you, as my dancing

friend says "have a problem with all of rock history.", and because who, other than a petty, too serious bitch dismisses Zeppelin?! Do you accept the circumstances and phallogocentricities of the last 50+ years of music, as it exists in popular culture and in your "punk rock community" as simply *how it is*?

Who do you excuse and why? Do you check your personality and your politics at the door and just dance or just rock or just let side A spin out? Can you ignore the marginalization of lady-lives that line your record shelves, and give yrself where you can to where you identify, bridging the sometimes massive gulf, because it's either that or purge yr collection of everything but wordless free jazz / German micro house 12"s and/or Mr. Lady Records releases.

It is almost too big of a question to ask. I start to ask this of myself, to really start investigating, and stop, realizing full well that if I get an answer I may just have to retire to an adobe hut on some Italian mountainside and not take any visitors for a long time. Or turn into the rock critical Andrea Dworkin, and report with ruthless resignation that all male-manufactured music is in service of the continual oppression and domination of women. Sometimes I feel like every rock song I hear is a sexualized sucker punch towards us. And I feel like no one takes the breadth of that impact seriously, or even notices it most days.

My deepest concerns about the punishing effects of the emotional-wave is not so much for myself or for my immediate-peer lady friends who can fend and snarl from the safety of our personal-political platforms and deep crated record collections, but rather, for the girls I see crowding front and center for the *em* shows. The ones who are young, for whom this is likely their inaugural introduction to the underground, who's gateway may have been through Weezer or the Vagrant America tour or maybe Dashboard Confessional's *Unplugged* sesh on the MTV. The ones who are seeking music out, who are wanting to stake some claim to punk rock, or an underground avenue, for a way out, a way under, to sate the seemingly unquenchable, nameless need—the same need I know I came to punk rock with. It becomes a very particular concern because Emo is *the province of the young*, their foundation is fresh-laid, my concern is for people who have no other previous acquaintance with the underground aside from the shadowy doom and octave chords that the Vagrant Records roster hath wrought.

When I was that age, I too had a rabid hunger for a music that spoke a language I was just starting to decipher, music that affirmed my faith, my ninth grade fuck you values, and encouraged me to not allow my budding feminist ways to be bludgeoned by all the soul crushing weight of mainstream culture—I was lucky I was met at the door with things like the Bikini Kill demo, or Fugazi or the first Kill Rock Stars comp, or Babes in Toyland shows. I was met with polemics and respectful address. I was met with girl heroes in guitar squall, kicking out the jams under the stage lights. I was being hurtled towards deeper rewards, records and bands were triggering ideas and wrenching open doors of interminable hope and inspiration. I acknowledge the importance of all of that because I know I would not be who I am now, doing what I do, 12

years down the line, if I had not had gotten those fundamentals, been presented with those ideas about what music, or moreover, what life can be about.

And so I watch these girls at emo shows more than I ever do the band. I watch them sing along, see what parts they freak out over. I wonder if this does it for them, if seeing these bands, these dudes on stage resonates and inspires them to want to pick up a guitar or drum sticks. Or if they just see this as something dudes do, because there are no girls, there is no *them* up there. I wonder if they are being thwarted by the FACT that there is no presentation of girls as participants, but rather, *only as consumers*—or if we reference the songs directly—the *consumed*. I wonder if this is where music will begin and end for them. If they can be radicalized in spite of this. If being denied keys to the clubhouse or airtime will spur them into action.

I know that, for me, as an auto-didactic teenaged bitch, who thought her every idea was a good idea worthy of expression and audience, it did not truly occur to me to start a band until I saw other women playing music (Babes in Toyland, early 1990). Up until then—seeing Bloodline chugga-chugga it up 97 times on local hardcore bills had not done it for me. Dinosaur Jr's hair-waving and soloing had not done it for me. The dozens of bands, bands who's records I knew all the words to, who were comprised of 25-30 year old dudes, with nothing much to say, did not feel like punk rock with it's arms open wide to me. It took seeing Bikini Kill in an illegal basement venue to truly throw the lights, to show me that there was more than one place, one role, for women to occupy, and that our participation was important and vital—It was **YOU MATTER** writ large.

I don't want these front row girls to miss that. I don't want girls leaving clubs denied of encouragement and potential, quietly vexed and clad in the burka of emo's male dominance. Because as fucking lame as punk rock can be, as hollow as all of our self serving claims ring—that punk rock's culture is something **TRULY DIFFERENT** (sic) than median society—at it's gnarled foundations still exists the possibilities for connection, for exposure to radical notions, for punk rock to match up to the elaborate idea of what many kids dream, or hope for it to mean—for all of that to absolutely and totally exist—I believe—much of that hinges on the continual presence of radicalized women within the leagues, and those women being encouraged, given reasons to stay, to want to belong—rather than punished or diminished by the music which glues the various fractious communities together.

Us girls deserve more than one song. We deserve more than one pledge of solidarity. We deserve better songs than any boy will ever write about us.

Thanks to Andy Greenwald and Julianne Shepherd for their assistance. Now playing: Jawbreaker Dear You, 50 Cent, Ellen Allien Berlinette, Superchunk No Pocky For Kitty, Dabrye 12". Po Box 14624 Chicago Il 60614.

Mcfrenchvanilla@yahoo.com. New Hit it or Quit it out in June.



When the entire world is in the crapper, every activity you embark on seems trite. How can I feel good shopping for three-dollar

panties when there's a war going on? I can't conjure anything to do that won't seem shallow. Move to France? Move to North Carolina and hide? (Who's going to bomb a bunch of outhouses and moonshine stills?) Levitate the Pentagon?

Hordes of people in the Bay Area went to the protest in downtown San Francisco the day we went to war. Everyone was supposed to call in sick that day in an act of solidarity to help shutdown the city. My workplace was a virtual ghost town save for me, the scab. Hey, I work in a smut and comic book factory? What's to shut down? My co-workers began to filter in later in the day, having smashed the state early in the morning so they could still peddle smut in the afternoon. The image of my comic book kinfolk at the protest makes me prouder than a double-jointed porn star. Most of them went alone and in true renegade geek fashion. One woman was arrested blocking the federal building while wearing a tri-corner hat and revolutionary garb. Another stout, 50-year-old, comic comrade came limping into work after having jumped out of a bus window. The police department commandeered a couple dozen city buses to help transport the thousands of arrestees. City buses that come equipped with emergency exits. Pull the red lever, pop out the window, and tumble your fat ass to freedom. My other co-worker, Nikki, wasn't detained by the fuzz, but she was hassled by irate financial district suits that weren't able to make it back from Arby's on their lunch hour because of the protesters. At 5'5", Nikki is not a menacing figure, and she is as sweet as the day is long. But that didn't stop a flock of suits from chanting "Run that bitch over!" as she blocked an intersection. One particularly cheeky yuppie offered a driver the princely sum of 20 dollars to run Nikki over. Later, as she was walking away to join another group, a man in a wheelchair grabbed the sign that was taped to the front of her shirt. She hung onto it, not knowing if he was trying to get a peep at her titties or what. They had a tug-of-war, but soon Nikki felt self conscious about grappling with a man in a wheelchair and let go. The man reared back with the sign and then slapped her across the face with it! Her own sign! The humanity! His friends stood on the corner doubled-over with laughter while she pondered the ramifications of clocking a handicapped dude in the middle of a crowded street.

One thing I've noticed about the protests since then, is that I get a similar feeling to the one I used to get crashing parties as a teenager. The feeling that I was doing something slightly naughty and the potential for action was everywhere. Should I feel ashamed when I go to a protest for a good time? After all, it's a protest, not the Player's Ball. Still, there is a festive element at a protest.

There's electricity in the air, and a million different kinds of people to gawk at. Action in the streets, faces flushed with passion, everyone defiant and buzzing with alacrity. What could be sexier than that? Will I be permanently banned from Bloomington and crossed off your Christmas list if you found out I brought a thermos full of cocktails and went trolling for protester poonanny? Is it sick to be turned on when I'm supposed to be protesting the slaughter of innocents?

...

I can't get down with a lot of the music coverage in *Punk Planet*. Joan Of Arc? Are these truly the sounds one would expect to find on a planet of punk? It's true, I can be fussy and my diaper could probably use a proper changing, but there are new records that I like. The Bananas new release has my heart soaring o'er hill and dale. I'd heard it bandied about that this CD was a real departure for them, but it seems like par for the course to me. It's the same spastic pop, same excellent songwriting, same fist-pounding-in-the-air, anthemic choruses. Mike R. Mike still sounds drunk and goofy while simultaneously singing the most tragic lyrics of all time. It's like a cry for help from Barney of *The Simpsons*. It's nearly impossible to read the microscopic lyrics smooshed onto the new lyric sheet. Luckily, all of those years of reading under the covers with a flashlight actually strengthened my eyes (up yours, mom), and so I was able to decipher them. It's full of everyone's favorite Bananas subject matter: failure, alienation, hopelessness, anxiety of identity, tales of reckless escape and of being trapped. The new lyrics read more like a Sam Shepard play than the literal lyrics on their last CD, *Slippery Slope*, where every other word was: "it breaks your heart", "does it break your heart?". "to crush your heart", "heard you was a heartbreaker", repeated over and over again times infinity. In fact, some of the new songs are so far from literal that Mike begins to slip in some "I come from the land of the ice and snow" style mythic bullshit in the song "Nautical Theme". Who in the fuck thinks they can get away with a line like: "beneath the waves, with my mermaid" in a punk song?! Q: Could there be anything gayer? A: NO!!! Plus, the song is played heartfelt and acoustic. It's for the Bananas what "Time of your Life" is for Green Day. HAW! I could mock "Nautical Theme" until the break of dawn (thank you, Sir Mix-A-Lot), but the truth of the matter is, it's all baby animals and orphans writing letters to their dead parents to me. My cold heart is melted. I want to make a nest in Mike's ample chest hair and curl up in there forever while he croons to me in his sweet, deranged Muppet, voice:

Once I heard your siren song
I was crushed upon the ocean
But I've labored all along
Under one misguided notion
That one day you'll come back to me
I'll go walking in my cabin
And you'll be sitting there

PO Box 4047/Berkeley, CA. 9



"Michigan seems like a dream to me now..."

—Simon and Garfunkel

"Hey, how'd you get so anchorless?"

—Propagandi / The Weakerthans

I was the first to leave. Then my younger brother and sister, and, years later, my baby brother. My parents held out till the '90s, but they finally packed up and headed west as well.

Now there's almost no one left: a few elderly aunts and uncles, some distant cousins I haven't seen in 30 years, and some even more distant cousins that I've heard of but never met.

Soon there will be no one left, no one to greet or welcome me, no one to reminisce about the old days with, no one to come home to in the place where I spent nearly a third of my life.

Most people have mixed feelings about the place they grew up. Not me. I've got mixed-up feelings. I know it sucked, but some horrible form of nostalgia keeps pulling me back there, in mind if not body. I have this recurring vision where I end up finishing my days back in Michigan, knowing no one and having no clue why I'm there. Which is sort of how I started out.

I used to assume that my childhood and youth were much like anyone else's, some pleasant adventures and fond memories mingled with the usual terrors and neuroses of growing up. It wasn't until I started trawling through my memories that I began to see what an unremitting catalog of horrors Michigan had been for me.

"When did you decide to leave Detroit?" the comedian Lily Tomlin was asked. "When I realized where I was," she sensibly replied. Detroit occupies only one small corner of southeastern Michigan, but it casts a long shadow. Half the state's inhabitants live in its immediate vicinity, and it's Michigan's only city of real significance.

Before you Michiganders (yes, they're really called that) rise up in anger to reply that Owosso, Petoskey, Port Huron, St. Ignace and Zilwaukee are all perfectly fine places to live, yes, I'm sure they are. But when I say "real significance," I'm talking about cities that have an impact on the world at large or at least that the world at large has heard of.

These days Detroit is mostly known for post-apocalyptic desolation and its burgeoning garage-rock industry, but when I was a lad, it was renowned for building behemoth-like automobiles and its pioneering place in America's industrial revolution. It was never a very nice place—manufacturing towns seldom are—but it was livable place. Well, some called it living. I begged to differ.

Even as a tiny child I knew something was wrong with my hometown. It smelled bad, just for starters. And looked ugly. And everyone seemed remarkably stupid, though that was probably just my arrogance precociously kicking in at age three.

Since then of course it's been nothing but downhill for the Motor City, or Murder City as it became popularly known. A million people—half its population—left, and much of the inner city reverted to fields and scrubland. For students of urban decay and failed industrial policy, Detroit serves as both classroom and textbook.

Look at it this way: it's hard to think of France without thinking of Paris, of England without London coming to mind. Mention the United States to most folks around the world, and New York or maybe Los Angeles will figure large in their musings. But Michigan? Well, we've got Detroit, and what's that going to do for a state's self-esteem?

It sure didn't do much for mine. To be fair, over my lifetime I've met many healthy, well-adjusted people who grew up in or around Detroit and have fond memories of the place (note, however, that few if any of them still live there). I myself didn't do so well.

I left at 17, but didn't get far: a full 35 miles down I-94 to Ypsilanti, which remains to this day the saddest, weirdest, and scariest place I have ever lived. When I say "scariest," I don't mean Detroit-style scary. Though I saw a fair bit of crime and violence in Ypsi, most of the crime was being committed by people like me and my ne'er-do-well buddies, and most of the violence was being perpetrated by the police in pursuit of, well, me and my ne'er-do-well buddies.

Ypsilanti was the first place I saw someone get shot and the first place I got thrown in jail. In the two and a half years I lived there I also got expelled from college three times and was robbed of (or otherwise lost) everything I owned more times than that. I was homeless two or three times, get arrested a lot and managed to stay drunk and/or high on drugs through nearly all of it.

The truly scary thing is that I might have stayed there forever, or at best moved another nine miles down the road to Ann Arbor. It was the police who did me the favor of chasing me clear out of Michigan. Facing a long prison term, I did what seemed like the sensible thing and hit the road. I thought my life was over at 20, but in reality it had just begun. I used to imagine that I would have eventually left Michigan anyway, but I'm not sure I would have had the balls. Better the devil we know and all that...

I do have some happy memories of Ann Arbor, quite a few, actually, considering the relatively short time I actually lived there. It's an easy place to live. Just one example: when you ride a bike in Berkeley, you're almost always on an incline. Riding down from Telegraph to Gilman is a breeze; you don't even have to pedal most of the way. But coming home at 2 am, it's a long, hard slog uphill.

Ann Arbor, by contrast, is flat, at least the central part of it. On hot summer nights, wearing next to nothing, I'd roll around on my bicycle, giving a few languid kicks to the pedals every half block or so. That's the fond image of life in Ann Arbor that I keep close to my heart. Somehow I seem to have forgotten the eternal and infernal winters, struggling to keep on my feet as I walked

across the Diag into the teeth of an arctic gale.

I've also managed to overlook all those basement flats with no heat that we kept getting evicted from, all my friends nodding out and overdosing and dying on heroin, the excruciating, mind-numbing boredom of yet another night with nothing to do but go down to the same bar and smoke the same dope and pretend the same revolution was still just around the corner.

For the first part of the '70s my short-term memory was impaired enough that I kept coming back to Ann Arbor whenever things got too stressful in the big world out there. I was sure New York or California were where I wanted to be, needed to be, but inside I still feared I was just this hick kid from Michigan with a funny nasal accent that made me sound like a farmer and that more sophisticated, big-city people liked to make fun of.

So I'd come back, again and again, to a place that was no longer the home I fancied it being. Each time fewer people I knew were still around, and those who were seemed less excited to see me. I thought they resented my freedom and spirit of adventure, but they were just getting on with their lives. The novelty of peripatetic hippies had long since worn off.

After 1974, I didn't come back so much, and only for visits. My Michigan accent had finally morphed into a pretentious California drawl that marked me out as a foreigner. The bartender down at the Flame always remembered me, and asked after my brother as well, but apart from that I could walk down street after street and not see a single face I recognized.

I had an especially weird experience sometime in the early '90s. On this visit, people looked eerily familiar. So many people still sported beards and long hair that it could have been the '60s or '70s, but it wasn't just that. I knew the faces, heard the echoes of old conversations when they spoke. I felt as though I knew everybody but that I was invisible to them, almost as though I were a ghost condemned to stalk the world that had once been mine.

Eventually it sunk in that the people I was seeing couldn't be friends from the past because if they were they'd be 20 or 25 years older, just as I was. But they could be the children, real or metaphorical, of my generation, and suddenly I felt so lost and alone.

Since then my visits to Michigan have been rare and brief. A day or two to see a band or wander past the old familiar landmarks, maybe, and in 1997 I spent a few days helping my parents pack up their house for the move to California. It was the house I'd spent most of my childhood in, and I remember as we drove away making a conscious decision not to look back. It hadn't been a happy house for me, not ever, really, and it felt like a hollow triumph to finally see the last of it.

But the day before we'd taken a drive along the Detroit River, past where the steel mills and the chemical factories used to vent their toxic clouds, where I'd struggled with a jack hammer that weighed more than me, breaking up rocks under the slag pit and thinking that the hell the nuns warned me against could scarcely be

worse than this.

I remembered reading *Crime And Punishment* by the light of a six-foot high gas flame on top of the Zug Island coke ovens on a blistering summer night, high on mescaline and overlooking the lights and fires of an industrial landscape in which, if a single blade of grass grew, it would be a miracle.

There was the soul-killing monotony of the assembly line, painting fenders at the Ford plant and drilling holes in camshafts for Chrysler. Like the other men I smoked and swore and drank endless cups of bad coffee, but unlike them (or maybe not), I was crying inside, because I could never understand how someone was meant to live like this. I would rather die, I said. And believe me, I tried.

I remembered the Motor City burning in the night, clouds of smoke rising toward what looked like outer space while the city I had known all my life collapsed into ruin and soldiers in tanks rolled down Woodward Avenue. At the time young hotheads like myself cheered the destruction because we dreamed that a greater, more lovely and just city would rise in its place. We couldn't have been more wrong.

The closest thing I have to romantic memories of those days is of hanging out under bug-swarmed street lamps with my gang, time seeming in those thick and muggy nights to enfold us like a shroud and keep us there forever, laughing and joking and posturing to cover up the boredom and terror that lived at the core of our souls.

The reality is that it wasn't more than a summer or three before we went our separate ways. There were cars, girlfriends, the Army, the police: everything worked to pull us apart, and there had never been that much to keep us together, apart from the isolation that we shared. So alone and so afraid were we that the closest we usually came to meaningful human contact was when we were fighting or running for our lives.

Nearly all those guys are gone now, mostly dead, a few in prison. I'm not sure who the luckier ones are. Nor am I any surer why I'm still here, often feeling just as alone and afraid as always, but with a lifetime of experiences and memories that never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined in those Michigan nights of long ago.

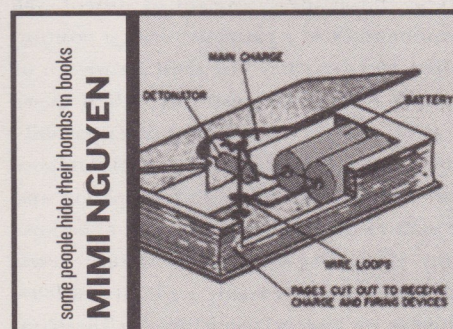
The factories along the Detroit River have nearly all gone quiet now. The air is breathable, the water very nearly swimmable. There's a feeling of quiet, of emptiness, which never seemed to be there when I was a child. It's not a peaceful sort of quiet—at least it didn't feel that way to me—but a resigned, fatalistic, perhaps slightly relieved quiet, as though we'd been through a war and lost.

My parents dropped me at the airport the next day. It was June or early July, and from the plane I could see Michigan recede below me, green and voluptuous as it can be before the long summer fully kicks in and bakes everything to a desiccated, weary brown. I felt a sense of vertigo that I don't normally get on planes, and I realized it was nothing to do with flying.

It was more that there was nothing connecting me to the land

below. When I leave London or New York or San Francisco, I always feel a rush of emotion triggered by conflicting memories of all the good and bad that has happened there, the loves won and lost, the triumphs and humiliations. With Michigan, it's just a dull, aching emptiness. How could I have lived there so many years and made so little connection to its land and its people? When I interviewed John Samson of the Weakerthans, I asked him about his song "Anchorless." I had assumed that it was about someone who like me had left his hometown behind in search of better and bigger things, only to end up rootless and disconnected. But Samson corrected me, telling me that the song was "about someone who stayed, but who never found that idea of community, that idea of connection with other people."

It didn't fully sink in then, but maybe it has now. The problem never was Michigan, it was me. If a guy is determined enough—and I was—to live life on the outside looking in, he can do it, whether it's in a small town in Michigan or the middle of Hong Kong or Manhattan. And if I want community, it's as near as a smile or a kind word or a helping hand to whomever I meet, wherever I am. Sometimes it seems as though it takes forever to learn how to live in this world.



Two weeks after the war began I donned my red Members Only jacket, slicked back my skate punk hair and jumped in the car to drive across the

Bay. A fellow feminist and queer academic, Matt had invited me to her appearance with the drag troupe The Disposable Boy Toys at a Queer Alliance benefit in the City. Before the show she drew me backstage through a wondrous sea of boys packing and binding: punk boys with mohawks and sleeveless jean jackets, glitter boys in angel wings and pink ties, and jock boys in backward baseball caps and smudges of facial hair. I didn't need the MC Summer's Eve to tell me, as she did before presenting the first act, "You may think you don't swing that way, but you do." These boys were *hot*.

Between the effeminate nerds in glasses and natty slicksters in three-piece suits, the larger political possibilities of drag denaturalize the matching of binary gender to particular bodies and present a range of femininities and masculinities. (I felt like a teenaged girl, swooning over the prospects dancing across the stage.) But drag can also highlight the acts of policing that non-gender normative persons are subject to in their everyday lives, the demands they face to perform the "appropriate" gender and the

threats that follow. What appears as performance in the theatrical space of the drag show is a matter of off-stage survival for some. These tensions dramatized in the drag show—between the interior and the exterior of the self, the privilege of mobility and violence of normalization, the hierarchical spaces of disruption and danger—can also be put to work at other pressure points where social forces constrain the available possibilities for being in the world.

As a drag troupe with a critical political consciousness, the Disposable Boy Toys performed an anti-capitalism act and an anti-war act (and these are simplifications of their "messages"), both featuring vignettes of acts of policing. In the first, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited by a small group standing at attention before the song kicked in with heavy guitars and lyrics despairing the state of the union. As two performers furiously lip-synced the verses, men in lab coats adjusted the height of arms in salute, delivering scoldings and slaps when a person failed to maintain the proper posture. In the antiwar act, a police officer under the direction of a masked George W. Bush gagged protesters (with duct tape) who mouthed the lyrics: "Hey hey, U.S.A., how many kids did you kill today?" At the conclusion of the song, one of the protesters held up a sign that read, "What are YOU going to do about it?"

Watching these staged acts of civil disobedience, I thought about how the accumulation of an array of effects—the songs chosen, the voiceless gestures translating agreement or dissent, the address to the viewer—communicated a particular critical position in relation to nationalism and the state. The theatricalization of political rage is historically a vital component of radical queer activism, and as a strategy of contestation manifests other possibilities for a radical cultural politics. In particular, these acts can pose a challenge to the short-circuiting of the civic imagination and provide a critical mode to think through the production of national affect or sentimentality. While drag addresses the intimate levels of consciousness at which gender and sexuality are lived and felt—as meaningful embodiment or violent regulation—its theatrical mode can also be made to interrogate the intimate levels of consciousness at which nationalism and democracy are lived and felt. The anti-war acts suggest that political anger is not sanctioned in the current climate. What modes of feeling are, and what does this mean for realizing democracy?

In a national address George W. Bush reads out loud a letter from a fourth grader offering her father up for war, and television cameras capture U.S. soldiers inscribing the names of the World Trade Center dead on bombs dropped over Iraq. Tri-colored banner headlines scream "UNDER GOD" and full-color TV footage stream Senate members reiterating their allegiance to "God and country" after the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals released their ruling on the necessary separation of church and state. Newspapers and magazines print photographs of tearful wives kissing husbands good-bye as carriers loom on the horizon, and pundits of all sorts scold anti-war protesters for undermining the social unity of the nation. Amassing at the heart of the U.S.

national imagination, these are not moments that are concerned with gritty political dialogues and the democratic process. Instead, democracy is conceived as a sentimental and moral category, above or outside of the political. What emerges from these nationalizing discourses is a romantic ideal of civic life—the nation as family—that discourages participation in necessarily difficult dialogues about politics and power.

We witness the shrinking of available political exchange as war becomes the governing principle of the U.S. American foreign and domestic policy, and popular discourse allows for limited discussion of the military action in Iraq in not political but moral and emotional terms. As a dominant media source and staging ground for national sentimentality, the television news gives us the war as an orchestrated melodrama of intense emotionalism and personal triumphs; the cable news networks stream the headline "Saving Private Lynch," and there is no doubt a docudrama in the making. As a cultural form, the melodrama presents the war in the overdetermined and excessive gestures of personal sacrifice and honor in order to frame the meaning of the war as prepolitical. In particular, the war melodrama evades critical historical and political frameworks to instead individualize interpretations of global events and "manage" them as stories. Enacting simple binaries of opposition (between savage and civilized, good and evil, most notably) to bolster its claims, the melodrama seeks to resolve uncertainty with recourse to the personal, the familial and a moral authority assumed to transcend *all* political stances.

The belief that the nation provides a sentimental mode of social unity that transcends the political has become a widespread, "common sense" definition of democracy. And while the television news is perhaps the most obvious example of the war melodrama, this phenomenon is not limited to the media. Generated and regulated by a national constellation of discourses and institutions, this (forcibly) consensual space of the nation is emptied of debate, in which *feeling* differently is a traitorous act. It takes multiple forms but always as an antipolitical gesture that refuses disagreement or meaningful contestation. There is nothing that is not ideological about this, though it pretends to be innocent. For instance—encouraged to consider the military apparatus as something other than an industrial-economic institution, as instead the folksy muster of "our boys," the therapeutic language of troop support reduces the range of acceptable terms and categories with which to discuss war to nonpolitical and sentimental ones. And as an ethnocentric discourse (inasmuch as it pits "our troops" against a foreign "other," out there), it traffics in the active disavowal of the political and historical conditions of the conflict and its implications for targeted populations.

These popular discourses produce modes of feeling that constrain and block the political process of functioning disagreement, contestation, and dialogue. The frightening result is the sacralization of democracy as the moral measure of the U.S. nation, residing outside of history or politics, a *thing* to be safeguarded from

popular use or alternative interpretation. It is an exercise that assumes the protection of democracy from its actual practice. And in these sentimental moments of staged social unity, the state must seem to care, even when injustices on all sides can be attributed to its daily operation. It offers a narrow definition of democracy that is full of erasures and excuses, translating into immigrant detentions, the USA PATRIOT Act, deregulation and the dismantling of labor and environmental protections, a dangerous unilateralist foreign policy, and the slashing of domestic social programs—including billions from the Veterans Affairs budget which pays out soldiers' benefits and other forms of "support."

The chief social power of these sentimental discourses is in the labor of socialization. That is, they tell us how to be citizens and how to feel about the world. As political theorist Barbara Cruikshank writes, "the citizen is an effect and an instrument of political power rather than just a participant in politics," and there are a range of dangers involved in expressing the "wrong" identifications and the "wrong" feelings. Drag, of course, politicizes these dangers in terms of gender, bodies and sexual desire. But if drag theatricalizes gender as an effect and instrument of power, can it model a similar strategy for thinking through the making of national subjects? And can we conceive of a political cultural project able to appropriate the intimate, emotional address into a demand for democratic potential?

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Boy Bands Against the War (BBAW) wants to save us from an abusive relationship. Or more, they want us to save ourselves. A member of the San Francisco-based drag troupe the Transformers, Jason Blue envisions BBAW as a political network of boy band members united in their opposition to the war and the Bush administration. In a letter sent to O-Town, N'Sync, Backstreet Boys and a slew of drag kings, Jason Blue pitches for this coalition of cuties:

Dear Past or Present Boy Band Member,

The massive anti-war demonstrations that have sprung up all over the world in the past few days have been amazing, inspiring, empowering, and beautiful—except for the embarrassing and shameful absence of boy bands. Boy Bands Against the War is the solution to that problem: a coalition of past and present members of boy bands, united in our commitment to global peace and global justice.

The letter continues, "No one understands heartbreak like a boy bander. We know: it's time to break up with George Bush." As an organization in its infancy, local BBAW members (a.k.a. the Transformers) have already performed their antiwar rendition of the N'Sync Top Ten break-up hit "Bye Bye Bye" at various venues. But as a larger political project, Boy Bands Against the War speaks the language of popular culture, the wish fulfillment of crushes and other fantasies of identification with its stars. As black British theorist Stuart Hall argues, "Popular culture is a theater of popular desires, a theater of popular fantasies. It is where we discover and play with the identifications of ourselves, where we are imagined, where we are

represented, not only to the audiences out there, but to ourselves for the first time." The boy band is a commercial phenomenon of global proportions, a billion-dollar industry in and of themselves—you can't get much more "pop." But instead of dismissing popular culture (and its audiences) for the fact of its non-innocence, what else can we say about the character and range of any given commodity form's power and possibility, and what pleasures it might afford?

The promises pop musicians offer to audiences ring with emotional resonance because there is something utopian about their sentiments, combined with the sheer power of their mass appeal. In particular, the break-up song is both the end of illusion and the promise of a brighter future. The self-imaginings of a stronger "me" in the aftermath of deception is a standard tale in the break-up song; I don't know boy bands, but I do know Christina Aguilera is a fighter. (*If it wasn't for all that / you tried to do / I wouldn't know / just how capable / I am to pull through / so I wanna say thank you / Cause it makes me that much stronger / Makes me work a little bit harder / It makes me that much wiser / So thanks for making me a fighter!*) The break-up song is not just the realization that our horizon of potential is limited within the confines of an especially bad relationship; it is the affirmation that we deserve better than what we presently have. The break-up song is never just bitter—it is an avowal to realize a more fulfilling existence, to find meaning in other relationships, to desire other ways of being. So just as these songs (as commonplace and trite as some of them seem) employ forms of support and pleasure in pursuit of something other than a particular romance—a relationship doomed to fail because of lies, or a lack of communication, or inequality—BBAW employs forms of support and pleasure in pursuit of something other than a nationalist affect or uncritical patriotism.

This apparently trivial analogy is actually significant for the way it uses the intimate address not to shrink but *expand* the range of possibilities for the subject of betrayal to break away from what is safe, from what is perhaps sentimental, to instead imagine a different, more daring life. The individual initiating the (song) break with the deceptive lover or boorish President struggles through a public declaration of independence from the sanctioned space of romantic love or national unity, where we are so often told to look for social fulfillment, to demand a more equitable and accountable relationship. The prescriptive nature of courtship and marriage (especially in light of legislation privileging marriage for poor women and the continued delegitimization of non-heteronormative relationships), of proper citizenship and patriotism, is challenged by this public performance of disenchantment. In the right hands, the break-up song can become the space in which the nationalization of sentimental feelings (as dominant metaphors for subordinate citizenship to the state) is rejected in the song's revelation of its controlling violence.

While there is no word yet from the top-charting boy bands, the drag kings are in it all the way. And of course, the queering of boy bands (though perhaps not such a leap) is itself a critique of

available and "appropriate" masculinities and objects of desire. That a drag king might position himself in the firmament of pop stars is to reevaluate those norms of gender and desire, as well as our understanding of fantasies of identification and what they mean for how we build new ways of being in the world.

Channeling the utopian commodity image of the boy band, BBAW suggests that self-fulfillment as a desiring subject can be found outside of the bad relationship and in the collective hunger for democratic practice. As such BBAW reimagines an ideal love as the pursuit of social justice: "When the visions of war around you bring tears to your eyes, and all that surrounds you are the government's secrets and lies, we'll be your strength. We'll give you hope. Keeping your faith when it's gone. Our love for the people of the world is like a river, peaceful and deep. Baby, call on us tonight, because this we promise you: another world is possible. And Boy Bands Against the War pledges to make it real."

While popular culture is never innocent, it is important. As queer theorist Wahneema Lubiano argues, "It might well be that taking popular culture seriously could teach us something about form, about aesthetics and about the development of pleasure in politics." The use of self-theatricalization and star fantasies in the BBAW project stages and reclaims what has been made queer about democratic desire in the current political climate. And that fucking rules.

...

After the benefit I drove to Iraya's house, where she gave me some lip-gloss and applied sweeps of green eye shadow to her own lids while standing on the toilet. The car loaded with crates of LPs, CDs, and a six-foot keyboard, we picked up Jesse and Reginald and a keyboard stand and headed to the bar for Co-ed Magnetic, the queer discotheque offering "nasti new wave," "trashy rock," "hott hip-hop" and free admission to those who brought their anti-war protest citations.

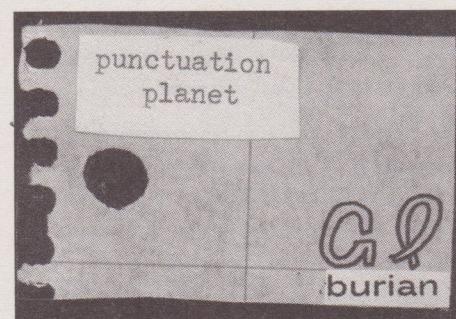
We danced to the best mixes ever (how long has it been since I've heard, "Boom, boom, boom, let's go back to my room," let alone, "Two of Hearts" by Stacey Q?) as loops of found footage screened behind us, a hypnotic blend of spliced scenes from '70s porn, B-movies, concert films, multiplied, quartered, and overlaid with Atari game graphics. Just after midnight Gary (a.k.a. D.M. Feelings) donned a black wig, shorts (tied with a chiffon sash) and a rare Frankie Goes to Hollywood T-shirt with a doctored photograph of Ronald Reagan, a bullethole square in the middle of his forehead. *Only Frankie can stop me now!*, the shirt read, and I pondered for a moment what it would be like had Frankie been able to do so. The small dance floor cleared, he became "Bibi," lip-syncing to "The Professionals" from *Ladies and Gentlemen*, the *Fabulous Stains* as the "Bargain Bins" (a handful of us waving our arms in the air and shaking our fine asses) acted as his Greek chorus: *Does this country mean that much to you? Not me not me not me!*

The political project of "materializing democracy" is multifaceted. I need poststructuralist political theory, drag troupes and club nights with antiwar admission policies to sustain me in this

continuing state of emergency. (As Matt said, "For some persons and populations, this level of state surveillance and social discipline is not new.") This sort of performative political theory is as vital as arguments concerning the nuances of social policy or collective organizing for structural reform. While these difficult political dialogues and decisions require a different sort of commitment, when these dialogues and decisions are blocked by cultural practices that manage and contain discourses about democracy, we need to examine how and why.

The staging of forbidden feelings of queer desire, critical rage, or democratic disappointment is a critical counterpoint to the naturalization of hierarchies of "right" feelings, "right" ways of being. The violence of national normativity that is, among other things, gendered and sexualized, is here laid bare like a lover's deception, or a state's violence against its subjects. These are crucial projects that get at how ideology operates at the intimate levels of consciousness, feeling, and body, how fantasies and nightmares about who are imagine ourselves to be are produced at the junctures of power. They force us to reimagine how democracy is lived and felt, how it is translated into personal effects and collective desires, and for what purpose. And it means we recognize that these other cultural forms so often dismissed as trivial and sentimental—the break-up song, for instance, or celebrity crushes (I love you, Susan Sarandon!)—can be politically powerful, if only we could teach everyone the right moves.

As always, too much left unsaid. This column was inspired by the following: Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics, edited by Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson; The Disposable Boy Toys; Co-ed Magnetic and the '80s stylings of DJs D.M. Feelings, Bodystocking and Passé; the S.F. Transformers and Boy Bands Against the War (boybandsagainstar@riseup.net); and Leto Atrides II from Scifi's Children of Dune miniseries (troutskin is freaking hot). The only "good" thing about the current political crisis is that I've been affirmed in my celebrity crushes, whom are all anti-war. You can tell me about your boy band (Flock of Seagulls, perhaps?) or celebrity crushes at: Mimi Nguyen / POB 11906 / Berkeley, CA 94712-2906 / slander13@mindspring.com.



The weather in Chicago has gotten back on its miserable early-spring track, after a seductive spell of balmy, cloudless mid-

'70s days, which happened to coincide with the beginning of war on Iraq. These freak weather patterns were no doubt sent this way by Allah to encourage protest and maximum occupancy

downtown during anti-war marches. But now blonde-haired, monster truck driving Jesus is back at the helm, and so icy torrents of polluted and just-over-freezing rain are gushing down, keeping people home.

Those early days of war were conflicted and emotionally divisive, a confusing set of mixed feelings, and perhaps the weather was the final insult, a taunting seasonal bait-and-switch which turned our moment of righteous anger into spring break '03, and this would suggest conclusively that both Jesus and Allah are the fictitious delusions of deranged, fanatical imaginations, while the existence of ancient-Greek style gods, with all the human foibles and fallibilities intact, seems confirmed. These are gods who might travel to earth in the form of a bull in order to get it on with Columbia college undergrads; these gods would enjoy taunting some of their earthbound wards in the form of inappropriately nice weather for angry demonstrations.

I run into fellow North Carolinian transplant Ashley Smith at one of these war protests, and we walk along together for a while. I tell her I feel bad for the cops assigned to oversee the marches, lined along the street in their bulky riot gear. The weather is balmy T-shirt temperature; it must be insanely uncomfortable in an umpire vest and motorcycle helmet. She's unsympathetic to their plight. "I can't stand it when the cops check me out, just 'cause I'm hot," she says. I check the cops out, and it's true, they are checking her out. But the cops, like the Greek gods, are only human- and in all fairness, everyone is checking out everybody. In a city whose climatic extremes kill people in both summer and winter, and where the transitional seasons last anywhere from four days to a week and a half, spring weather is precious, it unifies the population in a common human thaw.

The simultaneous advent of spring and aggressive pre-emptive warfare has made these great times in America for being a single left-winger. There are protests to go to, networks being networked, connections being made, common interests assessed. A lot of phone numbers are being exchanged. But, like the anti-war movement of the '60s, you wonder if all that digit-swapping is going to add up to a solid, organized political force or just add up to another generation of children conceived while listening to Creedence Clearwater Revival. A disturbing corollary consideration is what the conception soundtracks to American love-children of the US-Iraqi-war might be. 50 Cent? The new Cave In?

• • •

Otherwise: war, in the USA, doesn't alter the quality of life drastically: I still have column deadlines, although I feel now more justified than ever in blowing them off and drinking heavily instead. These are, after all, days of intense darkness, sun notwithstanding. The mild oh-fuck feeling of the 2000 electoral shenanigan was a shit-I-locked-my-keys-in-the-car type of creeping doom, but post-September 11 America has developed a special,

new kind of bleakness, something never before felt by me in my many years as a citizen particularly enamored of the American Darkness genre.

I run into Tony Lazzara at a bar one night, intoxicated and belligerent, articulating the subconscious sentiments of the mass mind in his inimitable fashion: "Fuck it, man," he says. "I'm ready for it. Bring on the End Times. Drop the fucking bombs on us! Bring it! I know how to skin an animal. I'm ready for that Road Warrior shit." You hear this sort of thing advanced as a line of argument for ordering another drink and going home with someone random often enough these days, but for the sake of accuracy in belligerence I feel compelled to point out the logical flaw.

"There are no bombs," I remind him. "We live in the most powerful country on earth. There is no apocalypse coming. No one is going to do anything to us in the immediate future. Over the rest of our lifetimes, yes, there will probably be isolated and horrible recrimination, followed by increasing restrictions on our civil liberties. But probably no apocalypse."

"Well, OK, bring on SARS then," says Tony. "Whatever."

Lazzara's pro-apocalypse stance may explain his lack of attendance at anti-war demonstrations—"Bring it on, I know how to skin a squirrel" not being one of the favored chants of the modern American Left—or maybe it is just wishful thinking on my part that reads a strain of nihilist rationality into his lack of engagement in the down-town 'real world.' How else is one to explain the noticeable lack of enthusiasm for social activism on the part of the born-and-bred Midwestern indie-rock intelligentsia comparative to, say, southeastern transplants? Do Southerners have a deeper sense of social injustice? Or do they just understand that you are supposed to go outside when the weather is nice? The American South has a long history of terrible social injustice, and by regional default these events have often coincided with great weather. Perhaps Southerners are just more comfortable with that particular paradox. ©

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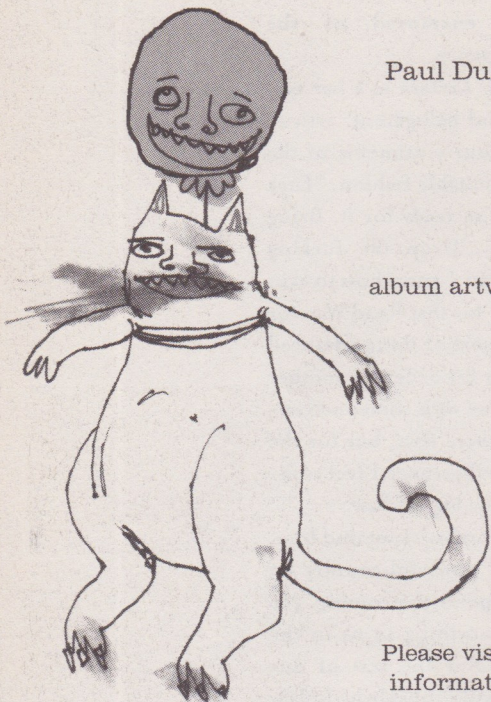
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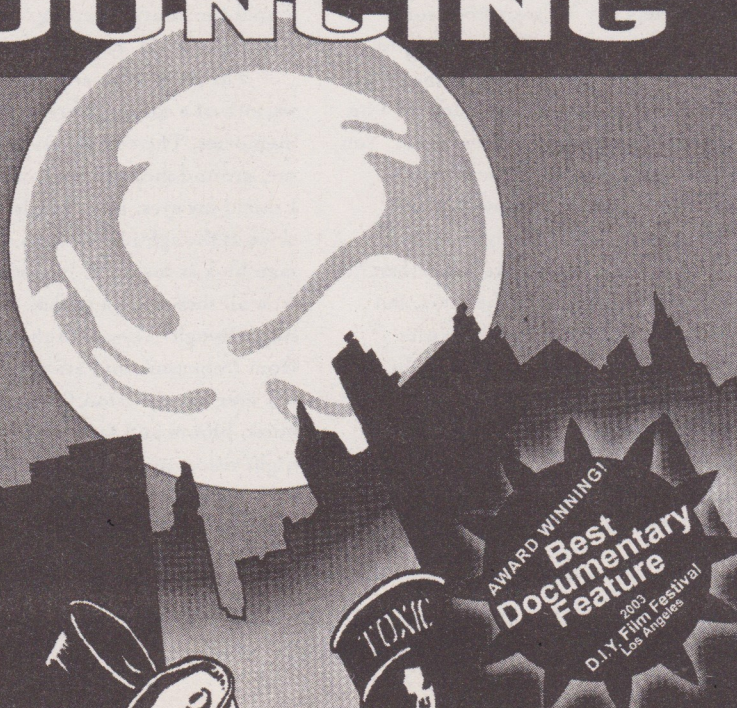
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Free Eugenia!

by Sam Costello

It never gets dark in LA. Or any other city for that matter. Too many lights. Street lights, all night stores, house lights, billboards, they leave them on all night and the light drifts off them and gets caught up by the clouds where it stays, a pink sky over the darkish city. It's night. You figure you've left the day behind when the sun goes down, but the city won't let you, the light wafts up and lingers, blotting out the darkness.

Walking down the street in my neighborhood, even at night, you can't miss the things the light reflects off: the razor-wire on the bottom of every highway sign, the lenses of the video cameras at the freeway entrance, the crack vials wedged into the grass between the sidewalk, and the big metal fences and the walls protecting people's yards. More than the smell of the air, or the breeze or noticing any of these things, tonight, I'm out to score. I've dropped my share of those vials on the grass.

My connection is DeShawn. He likes people to call him 2Cold, but DeShawn is the name his mother gave him, and my memories of her won't let me call him anything else. DeShawn lives about four blocks around one corner from my house. Around the other corner is the freeway—noisy, but the rent's cheap. I've known

DeShawn since he was a baby, since his mother moved into the neighborhood in '65, just before the rebellion. She died nearly 10 years ago, and it wasn't long after that that DeShawn started dealing. I was already a junkie. DeShawn was a closer fix than others, and he knew me, so some things were easier. Tonight I'm out of rocks, and need something.

The sandstone walls around the houses lining the sidewalk look gray in the dusty night. The dull gray is interrupted at regular intervals by yellow street lights pouring down bright cones onto the walls. Two blocks from my house there's a mural. I pass it every time I go to DeShawn's. I've passed it every day for years now, sometimes more than once. Most days, I just shut my eyes as I pass it, squeeze them tight 'til the muscles in my cheeks hurt, 'til I hit the curb, and then I open them again. You can't afford to close your eyes at night here, so most times I look away. Other nights though, I look. Tonight I stop.

The mural's been there more than 30 years now. It's faded over the years, but every time it does, someone—no one knows who—comes and traces over the lines, redarkening them, making sure that the black paint won't fade into the sandstone. It's a simple composition: a face, an animal, a phrase. I run my fingers over the right cheek of the face on the wall.

Some granules of sand come off on my finger tips. The wall is rough. It's not real, not true to life—his face was never that rough, not even when he needed a shave. He had such smooth skin. And warm, not like this wall. "Free Huey!" says the wall, the words hovering just to the right of his head, above his eyes. The panther on the left side is poised to strike. Always poised. Waiting. Huey. Well, Huey's free now, but I don't think that's what they meant. Huey, those were great days. The days when you'd visit me here. I still live in the same house Huey, the same house where we'd make love, and then lay in the hammock in the backyard eating grapes for hours, sleeping. I'm still here, but you're gone. Free, Huey, free.

The purr of an engine and the harsh warmth of a spotlight break me out of my memories. The cop shines the light on me, around me, and back onto me again. I shield my eyes, I can barely see. The car slows as though it's going to stop and both men look at me hard, like others used to. Now all they see is a junkie. They don't stop, though. They turn the corner away from DeShawn's and are gone. The spots left over on my vision from the their light blink, bloom and fade in front of me, my night vision spoiled. I look back at the wall, but can't see the mural clearly. I turn and walk on to DeShawn's.

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DeShawn's house looks as bad as all the others around here from the outside. Back in '92, during the rebellion, before DeShawn was living there, somebody tried to set it on fire. It has big black streaks up the front of it from the flames. DeShawn could have them cleaned off, but he says he likes them there. He says he likes that the only thing left from a fire is black. It's a message, he says, like the phoenix.

DeShawn was friends with my son years ago. But then my son went to find his father. We both knew his father was dead, so he wasn't going to find him really, but at least to find his memory, find out where he ended up.

Africa. He went during the war. Nixon had had it with the protests and the Panthers, so he started moving the men's draft numbers up to the front so the "troublemakers" would be sent first. My husband was in the Party, that's where I met him, and his number had come up. But he wasn't about to fight a foreign war for oppressors who wouldn't even give him his freedom at home, so he left; he went to Africa. He told me he was going to go, I knew that much, but this was when the righteous brother standing back to back with you might just as easily have been drawing a check from The Man, so he couldn't tell me when. One morning I woke up and he was gone from his side of the bed. Just gone. I found out later from some of the brothers in the Party that he

had gone to Africa. I got letters once in a while, but they stopped coming. A while after that I stopped hoping. He never came back. And then my son went after him. He didn't come back either.

The password knock on DeShawn's thick metal door brings a "Who there?" from inside the house.

"Eugenia."

The door opens. I step in and Leroy closes it behind me. Leroy was one of our first students at the community school. One of the first in our free breakfast program for the kids, too. Leroy's a smart boy—no, he's a smart *man*, now. But back when Huey was around, we didn't call people in his line of work men, we called them parasites.

"Leroy."

"Mrs. Waters."

The lights in DeShawn's house are always low. Too low for my eyes now that I'm getting older. I had a hard time seeing where I was going at first, but now I can move in here like I can through my bedroom with all the lights off. I get what I came for, leave what I have, and go.

The weight in my pocket is a reassuring presence, a protection against danger as I walk back to my home. There's not many people on the streets in the neighborhood tonight, but the wind's up and blowing air in off the ocean. It's a cool breeze. I guess that's something I always liked about L.A. The wind here cools you down, relaxes you

on good days. I couldn't move to Oakland, no matter what Huey said, because the breeze off the Bay just made me cold. I pass Huey's face again on the way back. I stop again. What's gotten into you, Eugenia? Twice in one day—you haven't done this in 20 years. And you probably won't have the chance to do it again 20 from now.

Huey, what happened? It made so much sense back then. We had momentum, we had support all around the country. We had friends in Europe. They were writing books and articles in magazines, and we were on our way. When you were around Huey, there was nothing to do but work for you. That was all we needed, to know that this was what you wanted—what the people wanted—and that we were going to get it for them. It was near our hands, but we just couldn't hold it. It was everything to us, and we just couldn't hold it.

Tears start in my eyes. I give Huey the closed fist salute and go home.

As soon as the key is in the lock I can picture my lighter. I can see it in my hands, and my fingers turning it over, my thumb spinning the dial that sparks the flame. It's dark in my house at this time of night, but every so often, a spark and a brief flame spill light onto my face. ©

Sam Costello is a writer and journalist living in Philadelphia. His writing has appeared in PC World, Rue Morgue, CNN.com, Buzzsaw Haircut, and various mini-comics and zines. This is his first published short story.

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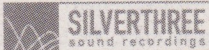
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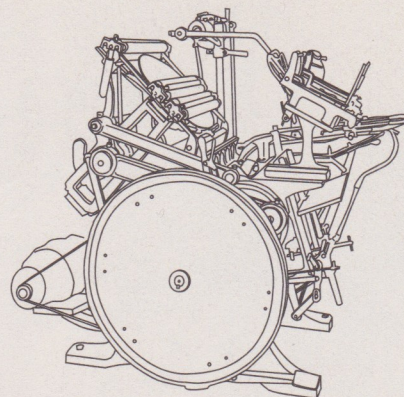
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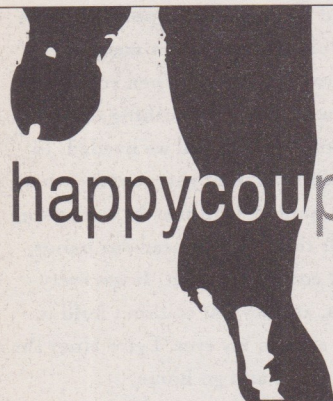
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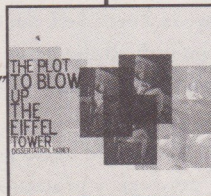


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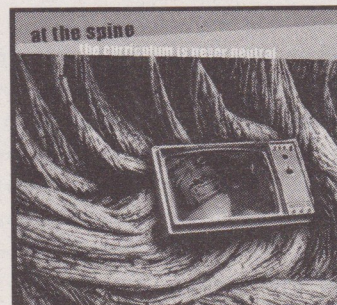
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Taking Care of Your Records

By Dave Hofer

Record collecting has become some sort of weird status symbol within underground. The fact that people horde records and probably don't even listen to them makes me shake my fists in anger. Personally, I'd rather have 10 different records than 10 copies of one record on different colors of vinyl, but I digress. If you're going to collect records, or are just a fan of having lots of music to choose from (like myself), you should at least care for them properly.

As I've gotten older, the amount of records I've amassed has become far more substantial than the days when I could fit all of my 7" and LPs in the space between my speaker and my stereo. I eventually bought a bookcase for them, but there are still a few good (and cheap) ideas that will allow your records to be enjoyed for years to come.

First and foremost, one should always store your records upright. Keeping your records flat can lead to warping and those weird white rings on the record sleeves. Storing them vertically not only prevents this sort of damage, but keeps your records easy to access. Plus, the spine of the LP is a crucial part of the artwork that should not go neglected when basking in the glory of your collection.

To store your records, you can always order boxes to keep them in, but what fun is that? Two options exist for 7"s as far as keeping them tidy. You don't want to keep them on a shelf spine out, as you won't be able to tell what you're looking at, so the most accessible form of storage is a comic box lid. Head over to your local comic shop and see if they have any extra lying around from broken boxes or something and flip the lid over. What you've just created is an almost perfect place to store your 7"s. The front and back support isn't quite high enough to offer the best support, but it'll do the trick. If you don't have enough records to fill the entire lid up, this can lead to the records sliding down and being irritating. Option two eliminates this problem, but is far less accessible: Vans size 11 skate shoe box lids. My friend Mike used to swear by these as they offer side support to your 7"s even if you don't have enough to fill an entire box. The comic box lids as well as the shoe boxes are both of a moderate depth and width, allowing them to be placed just about anywhere you have a flat surface, including a dresser, the top of a bookshelf, or even just on the floor.

As far as LP's go, they are a bit harder to store, but you can usually find some good crates behind a local supermarket that will store them. A chain of stores called The Container Store used to carry perfect record crates as they were stackable (with extra room at the top so your records didn't stick out) and cost about 5 bucks apiece. Unfortunately, the brand seemed to have been discontinued, so getting a crate that's not stackable and turning it onto its side seems to be the best option for keeping your LP's in one place. To combine the 7" and LP storage, you could just place your 7"s (now in the their comic box

lid) on top of the upturned crate, creating some sort of weird ghetto entertainment system. Hey, it did the trick for me for years.

Now that you've got them standing up nicely, you need to make sure the sleeves are protected! For all sizes of records, polypropylene (poly) bags are a necessity. They not only keep dust off of your records, but they help prevent basic sleeve damage like scratches and corner bending that can occur otherwise. You can find them online at places like bagsunlimited.com for about \$10 per 100. Another option is Mylar, but get ready to shell out nearly 20 bucks for 20-30 bags—unnecessarily costly unless you are *super* anal about your records. Speaking of being anal retentive, you can also purchase re-sealable poly bags for your 7"s at about the same price as non-sealable bags. This keeps all sorts of filth out of your sleeves, and looks pretty sharp as well. Re-sealable bags for your LP's are going to run you a few bucks more, but create the same protective effect.

Now, should one decide to get super-mega-ultra protective of their records, like if you're heavily involved in trading or selling your records, you can buy backing boards to keep your 7"s as flat as possible. Comic book backing boards work the best, as they measure about 7.75" x 10.5" to begin with. Cutting them down to 7.25" x 7.25" will allow them to fit nicely inside your poly bags and will keep warping potential to an absolute minimum. When doing this, though, it's best to keep your 7"s in layers. The picture sleeve in front, with the record/paper sleeve behind it and the backing board in the middle creating a nice little 7" sandwich of overprotective-ness. The boards run about the same price as the non-sealable poly bags (\$10 for 100) and you can cut them down yourself or have Kinko's do it for you.

Care for the vinyl itself is also a must (though I'm guilty of neglecting this crucial step more often than not) and record cleaners are available at places such as sleevetown.com for about 20 dollars. Actually, just about anywhere you look, one can find a simple brush and cleaning fluid combo for about the same price. If you are somewhat poor, like me, and just like to keep your records "clean enough," I suggest getting a small piece of velvet, and applying it to some sort of handle (just for gripping purposes) and brushing it over the surface of the record. No pressure is necessary, as you want to *help* your records and not hurt them.

Some of these investments may seem like too much cash to drop on just protecting some pieces of rock vinyl, but spending 20 bucks to protect 100 records is entirely worth doing. Unless you're buying hundreds of records at once, this 20 dollar investment will last you anywhere from a few months to a year. Not so bad, considering that your records will last forever and bring your ears much pleasure. ©

DIY food EVERYTHING THAT

Revolution Food-Style Now!

In my last column I gave a recipe for a French dessert. Little did I know that by its print date, doing so would be a political act. Boycotts emerged from worldwide opposition to the war in Iraq, hastening an uprising against the American stronghold of global enterprise—a movement that's been building its energy with each corporate merger.

When US warmongers wanted to take economic issue with UN members not "with us, but against us" regarding Operation Iraqi Freedom, it kept blowing up in their lunatic faces. Evian water was a targeted product, as *eau de French*—a truly dumbass move since an American company, Dannon, now owns Evian.

Jumping on the anti-French bandwagon, the House of Representatives moved to strike the word, "French," from their cafeteria menus, *French* fries became *Freedom* fries and *French* toast turned into *Freedom* toast. It probably wouldn't matter to them that *frites*—or French fries as we know them—originate from Belgium.

Product manufacturers, fearing boycotts of their own products attempted to protect themselves. French's mustard company issued a new tag line: "The only thing French about French's mustard is the name." What a relief to know that the bright yellow squirt bottle of neon sauce is *truly* American, yet owned by a British corporation.

With American interests reaching global proportions, far more effective boycotting came from the flip side. Europeans have refused to serve Coca-Cola and global protesters staged sit-ins, blocking entrances to McDonald's restaurants. These boycotts and protests took aim at the bottom line—the American dollar, laying the groundwork for a potential food revolution.

I say the time is now! If the world is giving up McDonald's and Coca-Cola, there's hope that a wider range of consumers will begin to make more politically-conscious—and far healthier—food choices. America is mainly to blame for the decline of the Western diet, sacrificing taste and nutrition for convenient and expensively-packaged food products which are beginning to permeate the global marketplace.

And while the corporate food industry continues to denigrate our diets by offering these cheap, mass-produced foods, it's not suprising to learn that these companies have contributed heavily to the current US administration. According to the nonprofit group, Be the Cause, food giants Kraft/Philip Morris/Altria and Pepsico donated 82 and 84 percent, respectively, of their total political contributions to the Bush campaign.

American companies own most of the packaged and processed foods distributed worldwide. These aren't companies interested in building a higher quality, nutritious food for mass consumption. They spend their dollars developing scientific methods to build

more accessible food products for our fast-moving society. They want to make money—build empires—so they spread out their interests.

An example of this is the Mars Company, which makes many American candy bars. In addition to M&M's they also create and distribute the vending machine found at your local Laundromat or gas station. Both products have global distribution. Both products are mechanically produced—but only one you eat. Clearly, the big food labels contain holdings beyond their food products. It's up to us as consumers to know the scope of these large corporations and, instead, search out the small, independent sources.

Our purchasing power as consumers is governed by the multi-nationals, further narrowing the idealism of our democratic society. Since these companies have the money to saturate the global marketplace with their products and offer them at cheaper prices, they're conveniently bought. Try to imagine a world without an oversaturated consumer arena. Few countries remain untouched by Western marketing. If they are, they probably have a tight embargo placed on them—a common tactic employed by the US when in disagreement with a country's political agenda. Cuba is one of these countries. The US placed an embargo on them in 1959, still in effect today—yet in a truly unexpected twist, Cuba has become a study in sustainable agriculture.

Recent delegations have traveled to Cuba to observe their sustainable agricultural practices. The irony of Western democratic countries looking to a poor, socialist society for pointers gradually fades when considering the survival tactics that must be employed by this Latin American island—a consequential measure should our political/economic/social climate continue on its current trajectory. Cuba operated on state-issued rations and state-run farms until its dissolution with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989. During this crisis, single crop yields from state-run farms were not effective in feeding the people. With the collapse of Communism, Cuba lost all its trading partners. The US tightened its trade embargo twice during this time—once in 1992 and again in 1996. When first instituted, the US embargo forced Cuba to turn to its Soviet allies for trade, which aided Cuba's introduction into modernization—more so than any other Caribbean country—but that was the beginning of the end. It's as if the country froze in this era. Automobiles from the 1950's still motor down Cuban streets today.

The one resource the country does have is farmable land and a bunch of scientists researching effective farming methods. Fortunately for the people, the Cubans have always been working towards agrarian reform, utilizing their one available natural

EATS, LIVES

by stacey gengo

resource. The country exists on basic survival tactics with little food other than what is grown and issued by rations. The need for alternate methods of self-sufficiency emerges from the constant fear that matters could get worse. Their farming is organic by default, rather than intent. They don't have the money or the means to use chemical pesticides and fertilizers, so they farm without them. Aside from rural areas, all available urban spaces have become small farming plots. The success of Cuba's sustainable agriculture centers on local farms, feeding the people around them. That way, the issues of transportation are removed. They grow crops seasonally and adjust to local conditions—the general principles of sustainable agriculture. Commercial food products like packaged cheese slices and cans of condensed soup are not available.

While their farming practices may seem innovative, there often isn't enough food harvested to feed the people since they rely only on the crops for food. In a country where simple items like soap are hard to obtain, human ingenuity forms the basis of their pioneering efforts. Deprivation is a fact of life in Cuba, but the people work to overcome this through practical farming. Despite their lack of resources, there is a rich tradition of cooking and love of food. In a country where every meal is a special occasion, we can learn to appreciate the triumph of these cooks with limited means.

Countries like Cuba serve as models for the new green revolution. The small organizations that sent delegations there to take notes are returning to try and implement these measures. We should support them. Seek out your local farmer's market, or even visit a farm near you. My sister just met a woman in her town that raises chickens for fresh eggs and will sell to her. Talk to restaurants you like and find out where they purchase their food—sometimes local options are cheaper for them. Ask your grocer to put you in touch with some farmers. Do research yourself. An organization, like New York's Just Food, puts the city in touch with the farmer through community sustainable agricultural groups.

And as for the conglomerates that rule our food choices in the marketplace, we can hope that enough independent companies will emerge and succeed to directly compete with the American multinationals. Although competition exists now, the possibility of independents taking over local markets has increased with new voices of dissent raised during the recent boycotts. A local success story is the Moroccan product, Mecca Cola. The soft drink company that claims solidarity with Muslim causes has become so popular that a second plant in Casablanca is under construction. Mecca Cola is a local option from an independent distributor and in direct competition with Coca-Cola. This is the type of product to look for in a store near you. As consumers, we should be con-

scious of our purchasing power and use it wisely. This goes beyond a reaction to the war. Make it a lifestyle change. This style of purchasing may require more work and a little bit more money, but the trade-off is taking a stand against the multinationals that govern our food supply. It gives us, the average consumer, a voice. It's your power, make it mean something. ©

For more information about the Cuban delegation, go to: www.foodfirst.org/Cuba

Check out www.justfood.org for information about community sustainable agriculture

French Toast Casserole

This recipe is for the folks in DC. It's a recipe from my sister. She included it in a recipe box she gave me for my birthday—one of the nicest gifts you can give is a compilation of your family's favorite recipes. It's a perfect dish to share for, as al-Hasan bin Ali bin Abi-Talib, grandson of the prophet Muhammad, once said: "Sit at tables and socialize as long as you can, for these are the bonus times of your lives." Bon appetit!

You need:

- 1 loaf of your favorite bread, cut into cubes
- 6 eggs—from free range chickens, slightly beaten
- 3 cups of milk—soymilk can be used
- 2 teaspoons of vanilla
- Powdered sugar for topping

- Grease a 3-quart shallow baking dish and arrange bread cubes.
- Mix eggs, milk and vanilla.
- Pour mixture over bread.
- Cover and refrigerate 1 hour or overnight.
- Preheat oven to 350.
- Uncover dish and bake for 50 minutes, or until golden brown.
- Sprinkle with powdered sugar and serve with warmed maple syrup.

DIY health

IN SICKNESS & NO WEALTH

by angel page

Surviving a Hangover

"Here's to alcohol: The cause of... and answer to all of life's problems." — Homer Simpson

Webster's defines a hangover as "disagreeable physical effects following heavy consumption of alcohol or the use of drugs." It *should* read: "Pure gluttony at it's finest." Does your damn head feel like that guy in the movie *Casino* when his head is in a vice, seconds before his eyeball pops out? Have you ever vomited at the sight of your buddy's bacon and eggs? Does your mouth tastes like your cat took a shit in it while you "slept"—or better said, while you were unconscious? Did you wake up next to an individual with minimal or no clothing and your ass hurts? Are your friends singing outside the bathroom door, "When you're sliding into home and your pants are full of foam . . . diarrhea, diarrhea, cha-cha-cha." Now that my friend is a *hangover*!

My disclaimer: **I'm not condoning or encouraging drinking.** So please, to all the individuals who are Straight-Edge, or a member of Alateen, please don't write me with your philosophy on the evils of drinking. I'm just writing about my own stupidity, OK?

The Do's of Drinking

"I'm worried about the beer supply. After this case and the other case—we only got one case left." —Homer Simpson

- Never drive drunk—a hangover will be the least of your worries!
- Drink plenty of water—dehydration is the major cause of a hangover. You can alternate between drinks with a glass of nice cold water to keep that hangover at bay.
- Eat before, during and/or afterwards. I can't believe this is recommended, but eating greasy foods can also help against hangover. The grease, well, greases the lining of your intestines, which slows down the rate at which your body absorbs the alcohol. You would do really well if you had some greasy appetizers to munch on throughout the night.
- I've known some individuals to take milk thistle before they go out to drink. Apparently they claim that they can drink more without getting as drunk, therefore they can "out drink" their friends. I'm not sure of the purpose, but they thought they were pretty damn cool. It is true that milk thistle can help the liver process alcohol better because it contains some of the most potent liver protecting substances known. Milk thistle prevents free-radical damage by acting as an antioxidant, protecting the

liver. It also stimulates the production of new liver cells and prevents formation of damaging leukotienes. It's a great liver tonic!

- Drink light colored liquors and/or wines—Avoid dark colored liquors such as red wine, brandy, bourbon, and whiskey because they contain more congeners. Congeners are toxic by products of distillation and fermentation. These chemical's impurities are the substances responsible for giving each drink its individual taste, color and aroma. Congeners do not cause drunkenness, but do add to your hangover.
- Drink expensive liquor and/or wines—Another tip is in the price of your liquor. The cheaper it is, the less it has been processed to remove the impurities which add to your hangover. So it truly does pay to buy the higher end product.
- "*Beer before liquor, never sicker. Liquor before beer, never fear.*" Beer is carbonated; drinking it before liquor will cause your body to absorb the alcohol much more quickly, which in turn causes you to feel the effects more quickly than usual.

"All right, brain. You don't like me and I don't like you, but let's just do this and I can get back to killing you with beer." — Homer Simpson

OK, so now you've done it—but you've gone too far and you are feeling it! What do you do?

- Believe it or not, vomiting is good for you. Get it out of your system! However, vomiting can leave you dehydrated, so you'll want to replenish your system with lots of water. For an added benefit, add a pinch of salt and a pinch of sugar to each glass of water—it's like homemade Gatorade without all the excess ingredients. This will help restore your electrolytes.
- Gingerroot can help settle an upset stomach. If you don't have gingerroot handy, buy some ginger-ale and sip on that. It's best to sip on it when it's room temperature, because cold drinks can shock a sensitive tummy.
- Time is the only true cure for a night of overindulgence! Give your body time to recuperate. It needs time to metabolize the alcohol you have ingested. The liver can only process about 2 tsp. of alcohol per hour. An adult liver can metabolize four ounces of whiskey or three 12-oz. cans of beer in one hour.

The Don'ts of Drinking

"Asleep at the switch? I wasn't asleep, I was drunk." — Homer Simpson

- Ever notice how movies make the drunken individual drink a whole pot of coffee—this *doesn't* work! Coffee will not sober you

up. It simply makes you a wide-awake drunk. Not only do you have a wide-awake asshole, his or her stomach may very well be upset from the coffee, so now you'll have to make sure this person doesn't throw it up everywhere. The only thing coffee is good for is the dreaded headache the following morning. Coffee constricts the blood vessels in the brain and helps stop that throbbing sensation.

- "Hair of the Dog that Bit you"—This just delays the inevitable hangover. A hangover is a mild withdrawal from an alcohol overdose. By drinking more alcohol, you may alleviate some of the symptoms of the hangover at first, but the effects are only temporary and you *will* experience that hangover you were trying to avoid.

- Don't mix your liquors. Drinking different types of alcohol confuses your body and makes it more difficult to separate and metabolize them.

- Taking Tylenol, Aleve, Ibuprofen, Alka-Seltzer, or any other over-the-counter pills while you drink or before you pass out can *very* dangerous. The liver can be damaged as it metabolizes the medicine and toxins are released. A study published in the *Journal of American Medical Association* found that taking aspirin before consuming alcohol actually *increased* blood alcohol levels by 26 percent and that the alcohol actually remains in the body longer because your metabolism is slowed. However, you can safely take a pain reliever the next day to treat a hangover, just don't do it before or *during* your drinking spree.

Am I an Alcoholic?

"Beer. Now there's a temporary solution" — Homer Simpson.

Here's a little test taken from Alcoholic Anonymous for you, friends or family to take. Answer yes or no to the following questions:

- Have you ever decided to stop drinking for a week or so, but it only lasted a couple of days?
- Do you wish people would mind their own business about your drinking?
- Have you ever switched from one kind of drink to another in hope that you wouldn't get drunk?
- Have you had to have an eye-opener upon awakening during the past year?
- Do you envy people who can drink without getting into trouble?

- Do you need a drink to get started or to stop shaking?
- Have you had problems connected with drinking during the past year?
- Has your drinking caused trouble at home?
- Do you ever try to get "extra" drinks at a party because you did not get enough?
- Do you tell yourself you can stop drinking anytime you want to, but you don't stop?
- Do you have blackouts?
- Have you ever felt your life would be better if you didn't drink?

If you answered yes four or more times, you might be in some serious trouble. Please seek out some help from your local AA chapter. If you have a friend and/or family member who has a problem and you need support, seek help from Alanon or Alateen. These groups are very helpful, as I used the Alanon group many times to help me through some very difficult times when I was growing up. ©

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Prescription for Nutritional Healing by James F. Balch, MD and Phyllis A Balch, CNC.

Home Remedies by Tanja Hirschsteiner

www.all-about-hangovers.com

www.cocktails.com

<http://www.aa.org>

Mosby's Over the Counter Medicine Cabinet Medicines, by Richard Donjon, R.Ph.

DIY SEX EARLY TO BED

by sex lady searah

Dear Sex Lady,

I have been trying to find my girlfriend's G-Spot forever and for the life of me can't seem to find it. What am I missing? Is there some magic trick to getting it right? Help!

—Seachin' for gold

Dear Searchin' (and the many others that have written in about the G-Spot in the last month)—

The G-Spot is actually spongy tissue that surrounds a woman's urethra, known as the *urethral sponge*. This tissue is chock-full of nerve endings and many women find that it is pleasurable to have it stimulated during sex. It is named after Dr Ernst Grafenberg, who published research about this wonder-button in the 1940s. There are people out there who have disputed the existence of the G-Spot, but ask any women who has squirted her girl juice all over her partner and they can tell that yes indeed, it does exist.

How do I find it?

The G-Spot can be located through the front wall of the vagina. It is usually about the size of a quarter and the skin covering it is more wrinkled than the rest of the wall of the vagina. It can be kind of hard to reach your own G-Spot with your fingers, so a dildo or vibrator may be helpful if you are going at this solo. Toys that are usually best for G-Spot action have a bulb or curve at the top (they are shaped kind of like a J). This curve will help you reach the spot without having to contort your body crazy-like. Any good sex shop should have someone who is able to point out G-Spot toys to you and many online stores (like mine!) have G-Spot vibrators highlighted. Glass dildos have become especially popular for G-Spot play lately because they are so hard and slick, they can put a lot of pressure on that spot very easily. However, you can get G-Spot toys made out of everything from jelly rubber to silicone to hard plastic.

If you are searching for this treasure with a partner, the best way to find it is for you to lie on your back and have him/her insert a finger or two inside of you and then have her/him make a "come hither" motion. If that sounds too much like a gynecologist exam remember that there is no reason why your partner can't be rubbing your clitoris or licking you silly while he/she is doing it. A lot of women find that it is easier to find the spot and that stimulation is more pleasurable once they are aroused. Maybe try to look for it after you have already had an orgasm or are just *super* turned on.

For the person doing the looking, a good technique can be to have two fingers inserted into her while you are giving her head and then just as she is about to orgasm, put pressure on this little G-Spot by sort of—for lack of a better term, digging your fingers upwards. Some women may not like this kind of pressure, some woman may not even notice that you are doing it, some women will find that their orgasms are more intense, and some may even squirt all over your face!

You can also find the G-Spot sometimes while having intercourse. I know people who weren't even looking for it and were in some crazy position when all of the sudden, *bam*—time to wash the carpet! Doggy style is a popular position to be in for hitting the G-Spot while fucking. The penis or dildo will be hitting the front wall of the vagina more than it would be if you were facing each other.

Here is the thing about dicks though: most guys have some sort of curve to theirs which is perfectly normal. This can work in some people's favor if your dick curves up, but if yours curves to the side to hit the spot, you may find it a little harder. Remember this though, you can't change the way your dick is shaped, so don't sweat it. In the long run it really shouldn't make all that big a difference.

What is up with the ejaculation thing?

Let's just clear this up once and for all: Women *can* and many *do* ejaculate. It is not a myth, and it is also not just pee, and, because it is very hard to paraphrase technical info, I am going to quote from my bible, *The New Good Vibrations Guide to Sex*, on the subject:

Continuous stimulation of the urethral sponge can cause the para-urethral glands to fill up with a clear, odorless fluid which is sometimes expelled from the body through the urethra . . . In recent years, female ejaculate has been chemically analyzed and determined to be distinct from urine in its composition, although the ejaculate of some women has been found to be more similar to urine than that of other women.

So, with continuous G-Spot stimulation, some women will ejaculate. Sometimes that means just getting a little wetter and sometimes that means squirting out enough fluid to soak a mattress. The thing is, for a lot of women, when they are getting to the point of ejaculation, they have a great sense of having to pee (remember you *are* pressing on the urethral sponge). Because there is such a cultural taboo about peeing on other people, that freaks 'em out and they stop before they can come. But if you can let go of that fear of pee and keep riding that dick, dildo or finger, you may then find your great release in a puddle of girly juice.

Some women who are great ejaculators find that it can get quite messy. Well, good sex *should* be messy, but if you are concerned about it, put an absorbent towel under you before you have sex, invest in some rubber sheets (the adult fetishy kind, not the kid bed-wetting kind), or put on a hat and some sunglasses and go get a pack of those disposable bed pads for incontinent folks from the drug store.

Thanks for the freaking advice but I still can't find the spot!

G-Spot play can be fun and for some women it can be amazing, but it isn't for everyone! Please, please, *please* don't freak out if you can't find your or your lover's, G-Spot. This isn't a competition and if you make sex too much about "goals", it isn't as fun. Most of you reading this have a whole big long sex life ahead of you and you may find that it takes years to become a G-Spot expert. You may also find that it only irritates you to have that pressure applied—that is perfectly normal. Hell, some women don't even really like having anything stuck up their pussies in the first place! Experimentation and sex are a great combination, but just remember that sex should be first and foremost fun and stress-free. If you spend a little time looking for that happy spot and it isn't getting you anywhere, take a break and try again later. As long as you are enjoying it, then it is good. ©

E-mail me at dijsex@punkplanet.com. My shop, *Early to Bed*, is at 5232 N. Sheridan in Chicago. We're online at www.early2bed.com.

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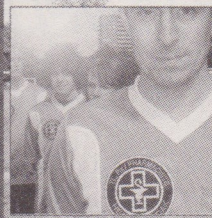
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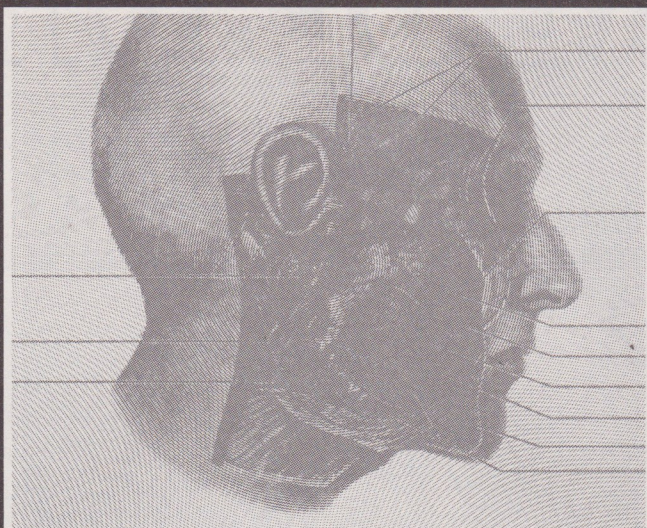
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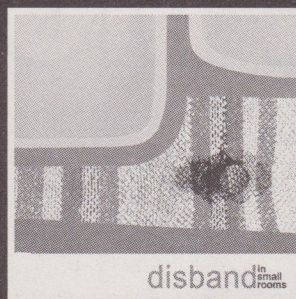
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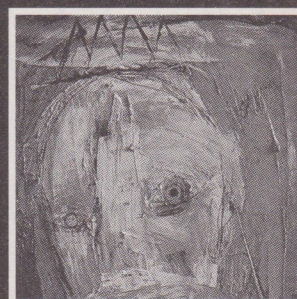
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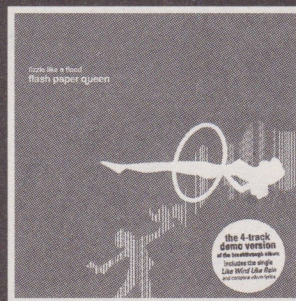


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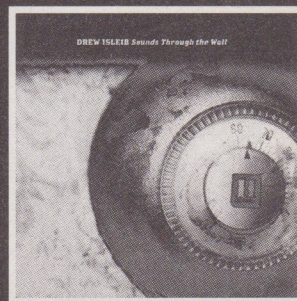
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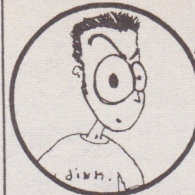
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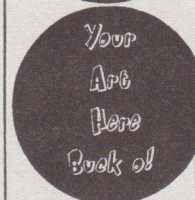
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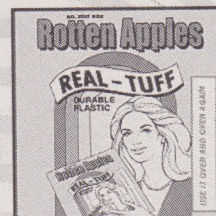


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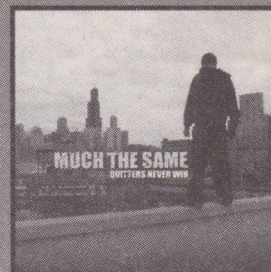
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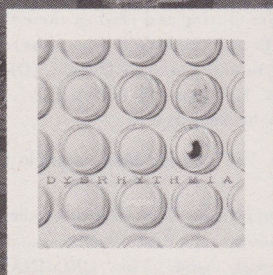


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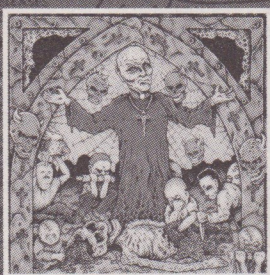
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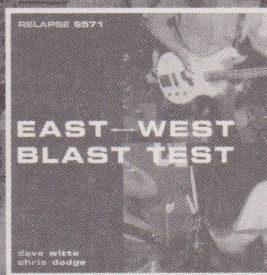
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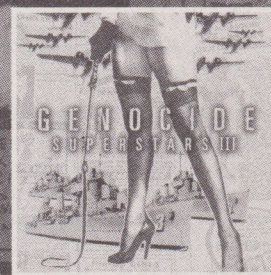
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A.18 – Foreverafternothing, CD

Once carrying the name Amendment 18, these guys continue to plow through late-'80s HC stylings with a more technical song structure that sets them apart from most bands of today and yesteryear. These guys are tough as nails and have hooks to back it while being damn catchy. (DM)
Victory Records, 346 N. Justine St., Suite 504
Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

Adrian Fortress, The – Burning In Water Drowning in Flame, CD

I'm pretty sure this is a concept album. The music here is jazz influenced indie rock that with lots of noise in between the songs. There are some really cool parts, but as a whole the record is too all over the place and never seems to come together. Maybe that's the intent? (KM)
Self-released, 1330 N Jefferson, Box 232,
Springfield, MO 65802, www.morawk.com/adrian

Adventures Of Jet, The – Muscle, CD

The Adventures Of Jet play keyboard-driven power-pop that is super-catchy and bouncy. There is a definite new-wave influence present on this release. Nice production and tight musicianship are what you can look forward to if you decide to purchase this one. (KM)
Suburban Home Records, PO Box 40757, Denver, CO 80204, www.suburbanhomerecords.com

All Girl Summer Fun Band – 2, CD

Yowza! I wish these girls were together when I was in high school! AGSFB is exactly what I would have needed to brighten up my boring angst-filled days spent listening to Psychic TV and Babes In Toyland. With their cupcake sound, these girls know how to write amusing tunes that don't suck. They vacuum up all the bad stuff that makes life a series of random obstacles and inject their music with giggly fun about unserious topics such as how cool actor Jason Lee seems to be. They also like to write about grizzly bears, troublemaking boys, video games and where the weather gets damn

sunny. But as far as I can tell, these girls make anywhere they are as sunny as Polly-freakin'-anna. Shwaa! I can't wait for 3 to come out! (SP)
K Records, Box 7154, Olympia, WA, 98507,
www.krecs.com

All Scars – Lunar Magus, CD

John Zorn, meet David Lynch. Here we have a movieless soundtrack so eclectic it boggles the ear. Electronic warblings meet free jazz jams and dramatic violins that warn of some impending catastrophe. The vocals go from belching horror spew to twangy country tribute. All somehow pretty damn listenable. (DAL)
Dischord Records, 3819 Beecher St. NW,
Washington, D.C., 20007-18002,
www.dischord.com

Almost There – She Was Like, And I Was All..., CD

Do you want to sound like midperiod Bad Religion? Do you want to play decent SoCal skate punk? Do you aspire to play the Warped Tour? Do you want that great tin-can drum sound? Well in that case, you're Almost There. (NS)
Bitch Slap, PO Box 952, Grover Beach, CA 93483

Amanda Woodward – Ultramort, CDEP

Easily my favorite record this issue. This three piece play some excellent mid-'90s-influenced melodic hardcore with shouted/sung vocals and introspective guitar work. The rhythm section is also top-notch with stop-on-a-dime tight drumming and melodic bass lines. Amanda Woodward's lyrics range from personal to political, and though they are sung in French, the band graciously provides an English translation. My only complaint is that this five-song CD is much too short. I'd love to hear a full-length from these guys, as I'm sure they've gotten much tighter since the 2001 release of this record. (KM)
Self-released, 151 Rue Saint-Pierre, 14000 Caen, France, www.sans-vie.com

Amazing Interceptors / B.O.T. – split, CDEP

On this split CD we have two bands from the big IL. Amazing Interceptors play some uninspiring, fuzzy, garage rock with off-key vocals while B.O.T. lay down some decent pop tunes with keyboards similar to Kindercore Records releases. (KM)
Be Mine, PO Box 133, Franklin Park, IL 60131

American Plague / Windfall / Vanguard – Radio Dick Three-Sided LP Series, Vol. 1, CD

This comp features three appealing punk bands: American Plague, Windfall and Vanguard. Vanguard jocks the skate-rock angle quite well. AP tends to be a bit grittier with some street, but more of Replacements-ish rock. Windfall is catchy, female-fronted post-punk. There is a lot of good music on this one, from what appear to be fairly new bands. With a little more touring and playing, these three could be names to really look out for down the road. I'll definitely be listening to this CD again. (DM)
Pal Tone Records, 167 Cherry St. Milford, CT 06460, www.pal-tonerecords.com

Anomoanon, The – Asleep Many Years in the Wood, CD

Heaps o' praise for Ned, the eldest Oldham brother (of the legendary indie group, Palace Brothers) and his rhythmic folk-rock band. This CRIMINALLY UNDERAPPRECIATED release is the unforeseen magic album I've unknowingly pined for. When I first put *Asleep* on, I listened five times in a row and miraculously got my house clean; it was that inspiring and kept my mind joyfully occupied while my hands washed and scrubbed and folded. I love Ned's voice, full of desire, and there's lots of it. Poppy yet substantial, the melodies are fetching, with interesting, unexpected chord progressions, builds and breakdowns. The lyrics are clever and sincere, about love, human relationships, and the challenge of communication, as on "Y'Know": "Why do you keep saying y'know y'know y'know y'know?/ If I understood everything that you're saying/ Why, I would be you." The songwriting has an original sound and vibe; the playing is mellifluous yet tight. Still, The Anomoanon get compared to the Grateful Dead. But

they're not a jam band and I am a Dead hater, so go figure. I LOVE THIS BAND. I'm their biggest fan. Please join me and share my love. (JS)
The Temporary Residence LTD, P.O. Box 22910,
Baltimore, MD 21203 www.temporaryresidence.com

Anti-Anti – Slumber Party Massacre, CD

Snotty pop-punk that may still be saved by maturity. The melodies work fine with fast guitars and out-of-control drums, and the talent is apparent. Right now it just doesn't work, as the Joe Queer imitation vocals and sophomoric humor knock this record down into obscurity. (BN)
No contact information provided

Arab On Radar — The Stolen Singles, CD

My roommate put it well: If you wanted to torture someone, lock them in a room with this playing. This is noisy, bizarre, cacophonous...rock, I guess. There's rock instrumentation, but few chords. Lots of high-pitched, note-picking guitar parts, distorted bass and distant, mostly distorted, vocals. Nonsensical. (KR)
Three-One-G, PO Box 178262, San Diego, CA 92177

Askeleton — Modern Fairy Tales, CD

Slow and pleasant electronic pop music, though the vocals could use a little variation. (He has kind of a Ira Kaplan of Yo La Tengo style). Not so bad, but nothing fabulous. I'm over it. (JG)
Alone Records, PO Box 3019, Oswego, New York, 13126, www.alonerecords.com

Baby Little Tablets / Benny – split, 7"

Nice and thick 7" from two bands on Boss Tuneage Records. Both bands here are pop-punk, but have

different styles. Baby Little Tablet are sloppy and amateurish, while Benny focuses more on melody and form. This is an odd pairing. (KM)
Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Beds, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Baxter – S/T, CD

It takes chutzpah to release a double CD, so give 'em that. Each CD has a different feel, though the nasally soulful moaning remains. The metal/AmRep-inspired chunking of the first disc gives way to a sloppier, poppier style on the second. They sound like they're still growing—in a good direction. (DAL)
Will Not Clear Man Records,
www.willnotclearman.com

Janet Bean And The Concertina Wire - Dragging Wonder Lake, CD

The former Eleventh Dream Day singer showcases a lovely voice in her slowish, country-tinged songs. The strings, gentle arrangements and warmth throughout are admirably adept. Fans of laid-back, melancholy country will find comfort here; my mom would like it, too. (AT)
Thrill Jockey, PO Box 08038, Chicago IL,
www.thrilljockey.com

Before Braille - The Rumor, CD

When nouveaux-emo bands have good musical skills and a firm grasp on song structure, it's hard not to wonder why they don't marry their talent with originality. This album has some variety, but ultimately it's not enough to be memorable. P.S. One of their labels is also home to Vanilla Ice. (AT)
Liquid 8, www.liquid8records.com; Aezra,
www.aezra.com

Before I Go – Save Your Breath, CD

Everyone gets at least one of these every issue. Not fantastic, not terrible—just down the middle of the road. Melodic punk rock that fits somewhere between Pennywise and Dashboard Confessional. (AS)
Apple Pi Records, www.applepirecords.com

Benny — Finnish Road Junction, CD

Unimaginative hardcore rock that fails at every step. The original tracks lack, well, originality, while the "humorous" covers amount to little else than irreverent clichés. The vocals are overbearing, the instrumentals lack any melody, and the songs all sound the same. Disappointing to say the least. (BN)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB UK www.bosstuneage.com


Black Eyes —S/T, CD

Innovative and engaging alternative rock that bounces between two drummers, two bass players, a guitar player and one or more vocalists. The whole thing tends to get busy and chaotic at times, and I wish that the vocalists and lyrics made for more emotionally driven performances. (AS)

Dischord Records, 3819 Beecher St NW, Washington, DC 20007, www.dischord.com

Black Keys – Thickfreakness, CD

The Black Keys toured with Sleater-Kinney. How the fuck did that happen? This blues-influenced duo had to really confuse those crowds. The bass-less two-piece sound is getting a little worn, but

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the records we receive (CDs, CDRs and vinyl) only—so long as they come from a label that isn't owned/partially owned by a major label), but we reserve the right not to review something we feel isn't appropriate for *Punk Planet*. Also, due to the volume we receive, some records fall through the cracks. Feel free to send us your record(s) for review (4229, N. Honore St., Chicago IL 60613), but expect up to a five-month lag time for it to appear in the magazine. So send stuff EARLY, and include any and all contact information. CDRs that aren't advance promo copies from labels end up in our demo section. All reissues are also in their own section. Records marked with a little ear () are "highlighted" reviews, which means reviewers found them especially noteworthy (not necessarily good or bad). Finally, please keep in mind that if you send us your record, we might not like it. The review is merely one person's opinion, written without God's endorsement. Any questions or concerns can be directed to Kyle Ryan at reviews@punkplanet.com. Please DO NOT CALL the office, as Kyle is not there full-time. Thanks!



with the heavier guitar sound and heavy bass drum, it is easy to miss the bottom end. This disc contains 10 original tracks and a slow, sludgy version of the Sonics' "Have Love, Will Travel." It isn't all paradise; this disc feels a little long with so many songs of a similar slower tempo. Akron, Ohio, has given us some greats like Devo and Chrissie Hynde, but you will hear neither in this release. Fat Possum, a subsidiary of Epitaph, must have seen something in the Black Keys besides big-time success. The general public isn't ready for this—you can't dance to it. (EA) Fat Possum, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.fatpossum.com

Black Rice – Rice Lightning, CD

Self-proclaimed as "post math-rock," Black Rice is actually less math and more rock. No filler, just some classic-rock stylings thrown in to knock it up a notch. Well executed, it further exemplifies your belief that Canada does rule. (AA) Scratch Records, 726 Richards St., Vancouver, BC, V6B 3A4 Canada, www.scratchrecords.com

Blacklist, The – Attacks!, CD

Real heavy rock and or roll, with big balls. Deep bass, thunderous guitars, and a raspy macho voice makes the six tracks great. Australia has a long line of great bands, and The Blacklist just made the short list. (EA) Stolen Records, PO Box 41, Prahran 3181, Australia, www.internationaltrash.com

Blam, The – The Blam, CD

From the U.K., The Blam sure has its fans, and they've been getting enthusiastic write-ups all over the place. Indie with influences from retro rock, Brit-pop, punk and East Coast emo, they're hot in a Hollies kind of way on "I Don't Care About Nobody Else" and "Various Disgraces" and a Herman's Hermits kind of way on "Little Pricks" (great name for a song). "Goat And Carrot (We Would Get Along)" (another great name for a song) and "Some Marry for Love" are great poppy/punky rockers. Tight and fun. The Blam are at their best when doing their pretty, rocking, punky vintage pop thing. (JS) Blueghost Publicity, Marisa Handren, 908-310-1821, www.theblam.com

Blanche Davidian – Attack Of The Killer, CD

Whiney, nasally and hesitant vocals over fairly generic alternative rock 'n' roll/punk with an overly liberal amount of guitar wanking. Kinda sounds

like a bad version of the Black Halos, who are pretty bad anyway. Throw in song titles like "Hessian Queen" and "A Genetalia Ballot" for extra bad-factor. (MG)

Self released, www.blanchedaavidian.com

Blank Tradition – Locked In The Backseat, CD

Quasi-bluesy, semirevival sound ripe with guitar solos and a heavy pop-punk influence. Dude, they even cover Bikini Kill's "Liar" with the whole guttural "Hoo-ah" at the beginning of the track. And if that weren't enough, their CD art includes Chuck E. Cheese downing some Bacardi. (AA) Rude Girl Records, 43 Raccoon Run, Hampstead, NH 03841, www.rudegirlonline.cjb.net

Blue Hour, The – I've Filled Up These Pages, CD

The girlish male vocals and soft keyboard and synth-driven post-rock on *Pages* are real pretty, but the lyrics are sadly vapid, like, "It's so fucking boring here without you." Of course it's boring here without you. It fucking sucks! But you gotta find a more clever way to say it. (JS) Alone Records, P.O. Box 3019, Oswego, NY 13126, www.alonerecords.com

Blue Rose Liar – When Shadows Swallow Shadows, CDEP

Three songs from New Haven's Blue rose Liar, who aren't quite hardcore, but aren't quite emo. They lie somewhere in between bands like Hot Water Music and Rites Of Spring, but nowhere near as amazing as the previously mentioned bands. (TK) Self-Released, PO Box 669 New Haven, CT 06503, www.blueroseliar.com

Bobby Karate – Hot Trips, Cold Returns, CD

Why would you call your band Bobby Karate? I don't care how fabulous you think your new electronic-space-rock record is, there is no excuse. And besides, *Hot Trips, Cold Returns* isn't even that good. (JG) Woodson Lateral Records, 2112 S. Spokane St, Seattle, WA 98144, www.woodsonlateral.com

Bonny Prince Billy – Master And Everyone, CD

Bonnie Prince Billy, AKA Will Oldham, is no ordinary bard. Among his biggest fans are Marianne Faithfull, Bjork and Beck. A relatively easy listen, *Master's* painfully fragile intensity is disconcerting, thus challenging: Something is slightly off. Still, an equally intense purity and tenderness

soothes. Dark, intimate and sparsely arranged, it's a loose, meditative concept record that explores masculinity, femininity, self and the dynamics of love. Trading in his familiar warble for a hushed, clear high tenor and a rock band for his acoustic guitar (plus barely audible strings and keyboards to warm up the arrangements), Oldham slides and picks his way up and down the trebly frets, backed by sweet, feminine harmonies from Nashville's Marty Slayton. Lyrically less dense than previous records, he's retained his typically quaint phrasings as in "Ain't You Wealthy, Ain't You Wise" and "Joy And Jubilee." With a few listens, these 10 oddly gentle songs will endear themselves to listeners, who may consider Master Oldham's best and most personal work to date. (JS)

Palace Records, c/o Drag City, P.O. Box 476867, Chicago, IL 60647, www.dragcity.com

Braves, The – S/T, 7"

Ex-members of Gods Reflex and The Evergreen Trio turn in two solid indie rockers with wistful lyrics like "Pictures of loved ones, of those with no home/ Pictures of loved ones, collapsing their own." (DAL) Johann's Face Records, PO Box 479164, Chicago, IL 60647, www.johannsfac.com

Bulldog Spirit – S/T, CD

Why anyone would want to be a skinhead in post-Romper Stomper Australia is beyond me, but this band from down under delivers the goods for those of us who can stomach the dopier strains of punk rock. Not surprising are the familiar ignorant lyrics attacking popular skin targets (including, of course, junkies and pedophiles), but their hilarious cover of Tom Petty's "Won't Back Down" comes as a total shock. Musically, they have a huge hardcore influence, which is uncommon for skin bands outside of North America. They also have a slightly more inclusive, positivist slant than many of outfits, with occasional lyrics about unity. The song "In This Together," for example, more resembles a youth-crew piece than it does a bootboy number. Releases like this simultaneously reinforce negative skin stereotypes while also proving that the genre can still have an impact when done well. The enhanced CD includes a video showcasing a drunken Aussie crowd going apeshit while being pounded full force with Bulldog Spirit's hearty thug rock.

Reviewer Spotlight: Eric Action (EA)

MISSION OF BURMA, *Signals, Calls And Marches*. When I heard that Mission Of Burma were doing some reunion shows, I finally took the time to record all their LPs from my collection onto CD for the car. I found myself listening to *Signals, Calls And Marches* over and over. The extended 12" EP was a tricky format. It gives time to do more than the 45 rpm, one hit side, one throwaway side format. Mission Of Burma liked to change their tempos and feelings in their music, and this record is the best place to start with Burma. Though it doesn't contain my favorite song of theirs, "That's When I Escaped My Certain Fate," it does contain "That's When I Reached for My Revolver," and "This is Not a Photograph," and the CD comes with the "Academy Fight Song" single. I have played this to a lot of people, and the reactions tend to fall into two categories: those who end up buying every Mission Of Burma record they can find, or they think they are crap. Take a gander of any Internet music site, and you will see the same thing. Although many will cite their LP-Vs. as the pinnacle of Burma, this EP is my favorite and gets the most play. They had not yet taken real advantage of tape loops and long, slower parts that they were famous for later. If you like Gang Of Four, Wire or Joy Division, you will love this Boston-based band. (EA)

Top five platters of my current crush: Briefs *Off the Charts*; the Exploding Hearts; Andre Williams Detroit volumes 1-4; Flaming Sideburns; and the Flip Tops.

Overall, this is a very solid early release for Brutus Records out of Italy, which considers itself "The Mafia of Oi!" (AE)
Brutus Records, Stevani 5,29100, Piacenza, Italy, www.brutusrecords.com

Bullet Train To Vegas — Profile This, CD

With the name, I was expecting a Drive Like Jehu tribute band. Aggressively mathy with melodic tempo changes nod toward At The Drive-In rather than The Hot Snakes' discordant noise textures. A more traditional rock approach shows their SoCal punk roots, but injects it with more accessible energy. (VC)
Letterbomb, 21661 Brookhurst St. #125, Huntington Beach, CA 92646, www.bulletraintovegas.com

Bury Your Dead — You Had Me At Hello, CD

Absolutely brutal New England hardcore from former members of Piecemeal, Groundzero and As The Sun Sets. The formula is all in place: thick guitars hell-bent for chugging, gruff vocals and a seemingly endless string of mosh-heavy breakdowns. I can see the blood on the legion-hall floor now. (PS)
www.alveranrecordings.com

♫ Buzzcocks — S/T, CD

I do not have to introduce you to the Buzzcocks. If I do, then drop this magazine and pick up *Singles Going Steady*, *Another Music In A Different Kitchen*, *Love Bites*, *A Different Kind Of Tension*, and find a copy of their first single, *Spiral Scratch*. That said, there are some other records they have released since then, including this one. *Buzzcocks* is definitely not their best album, probably not in the top five of their discography, but still better than 99 percent of your record collection. Shelley and Diggie have an uncanny knack for writing great pop songs. If this weren't the Buzzcocks, then I would be telling you about this great new band that you have to pick up. Instead I'm reminding you that they are still around. I am not finding any real hit singles, unlike their early records, where you knew what songs were going to be the hits. My favorite track must be "Lester Sands," if for no other reason then it sounds a little different from the rest of the disc. (EA)
Merge Records, PO Box 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, www.mergerecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Amy Adoyzie (AA)

THE AMPS, *Pacer*. Ms. Kim Deal (or as I like to refer to her in late-night fantasies—lovertits) could make an honest woman of me. When her twin sister and Breeders bandmate, Kelly, was sent on a minimum-security hiatus, Kim spent 1995 with The Amps. The recipe was simple: her songs, two subpar replacements for Kelley and Josephine, some pot, a lot of beer, a little crack, a basement, a snare that needed badly to be tuned and a four-track. The irony of The Amps was that they used DI boxes for all of the guitar tracks—no amplifiers. *Pacer*, which encompasses an All-Wave, lo-fi, all analog recording ideology, really defied the verse-chorus-verse conventions with narcoleptic guitar solos ("First Revival"); two-minute-long bridges, identical to the verse, except without words, ("Bragging Party"); and a song about how the band only "get high on music" ("Hoverin'"), which is a blatant lie if you know anything about the Deal twins. How else could she come up with lines like "humming eighty venus" ("Breaking the Split-screen Barrier")? *Pacer* borrows a lot from standard rhythm-and-blues and country riffologies and bubble-gum melodies à la Phil Spector, which along with the sweetly dissonant quality of Kim's cigarette-stained voice, blend masterfully into the rich, post-modern double fudge, chocolate chip brownie that only an ex-Pixie can bake up—and of course, it's a special brownie. So, if anyone knows how Kim and I can biologically fuse our loins together to create an über-baby, please give me a holla.

You betta shake it while you make it: Gravy Train!!!! *Hello Doctor*; The Thermals, *More Parts Per Million*; Ted Leo & The Pharmacists *Hearts Of Oak*; The Streets, *Original Pirate Material*; and Augustus Paul Straub *Grumpy Drunk Pendejo*.

Calibos — And The Days We Spent Go On And On, CD

This three-piece has the jangly indie pop thing going on with smidgen of noise, too. The trio's sound belies its size, and the singer's delivery sits on just the right side of deadpan. Interesting and often very pretty, especially the dreamlike "Little Current." (AT)
Handheld Records, www.calibos.com

Califone — Quicksand/Cradlesnakes, CD

Now that all of the critics have gone nuts over Wilco's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, we're in the era of the new alternative alternative country. Califone's mellow, rootsy songs layered with lots of ambient background sounds make them a fine addition to this new wave. It's Nashville coming off a lazy LSD trip. (AS)
Thrill Jockey Records, Box 08038, Chicago, IL 60608, www.thrilljockey.com

♫ Calvin, Don't Jump! — A Way With Birds, CD

Often times Calvin, Don't Jump! can successfully elude the label police, but many listeners place CDJ somewhere between '60s pop and folksy jam sessions. With Kirk Pleasant as this ship's captain, CDJ swim through the murky waters of slow, flowy pop songs that you wish your clock radio would play when it rouses you from your slumber every morning. Parts of this disc distinctly remind me of older Modest Mouse minus all of the confusion. Calvin, Don't Jump! offers an comforting soundtrack to all of your serene daydreams of floating down a river in an inflated tire tube with CDJ's arrangement of accordion, trombone, clarinet, ukulele, stand-up bass along with the usual rock stand-by—drums, guitar and viola. (AA)
Happy Happy Birthday to Me Records, PO Box 1035, Panama City, FL 32402, www.calvindontjump.com

Cast Aside — Overcome, 7"

What would make someone this angry at drugs and alcohol? The music is fairly tight for sXe, but the singer sounds exactly like the pit-bull I lived with who would bark at the furniture. Typical jock mentality focused through a different medium. If you like it, you like it. I don't. (TK)
Malfunction Records, www.malfunctionrecords.com

♫ Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds — Nocturama, CD

Nocturama, I am ashamed to admit, is my introduction to Nick Cave. He's scored movies. He's written novels. He's acted in films. He was a member of seminal Australian band The Birthday Party in the early 1980s. He's been making records with the Bad Seeds for several years now. (Some may say he's been making the same record with the Bad Seeds for several years now, based on some of the things I've read about him.) However, being unencumbered from the usual baggage a long-time fan brings to the first (and second and third) listening of a new album, *Nocturama* has found a permanent home in my CD player. Soulful rockers ("Bring It On") and slinky ballads ("Still In Love") are interspersed among songs like "Wonderful Life" and "Right Out Of Your Hand," which drip with melancholy string and piano arrangements. Your heart breaks again and again with every line sung in Cave's low, expressive voice on "She Passed By My Window," my favorite track on the record. With this record, Cave proves that he's ready to do anything but fade into the background as he enters his third decade of recording, and I'm heading straight for his back catalog. (JD)

Anti-, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.anti.com

♫ Charm City Suicides — II, CD

Charming, they sure are. Before I get into why, I first have to add that there's nothing that spectacular about this package. The recording is horrible, the vocals are inaudible, and the loudest instrument is the crash symbol. It wasn't until I read their lyrics that I was finally impressed. Here is a sample from the best song on the album, "Pizza": "Pizza is my favorite/ Food in the world /I almost like it even more /Than I like girls," and the chorus is the word "Pizza" repeated over and over again. What can I say? I'm a sucker for stupid lyrics. (TK)
Baths of Power, 48 Glen Alpine Rd. Phoenix, MD 21131

♫ Chesnutt, Vic — Silver Lake, CD

Vic Chesnutt is a musical prodigy, clear and through. Although dependant on a wheelchair since a car accident left him badly injured at 18, his amazing drive, passion and talent have resulted in 11 albums that have influenced hundreds of bands and garnered loyal following the world over. If you've never heard him, think Tom Waits, Bob



Dylan and Cat Stevens singing their souls out, and you'll just begin to understand what Chesnutt has achieved with *Silver Lake*, a beautiful record that shines with sincere humanity. Chesnutt's oft-talked-about lyrics are at their sharpest, with their disdainful humor. From the precious to the everyday, Chesnutt's songs cover each topic with poetic prose that has become his calling card. The musicians he put together for this project are impressive in their own right, and the talent shines through on the record. Every instrument, including the guitars, keyboards, drums, percussion, harmonica and the omni chord, was played with studious perfection and earnest passion. Producer Mark Howard finally found a way to reign in all of the emotions and sounds, and Vic Chesnutt has recorded an album that will stand the test of time. It's an essential piece of American music and already Chesnutt's best record. (BN)

New West Records PO Box 33156, Austin, TX 78764-0156, www.newwestrecords.com

Chiodos Bros., The — The Heartless Control Of Everything, CD

Heartless Control starts strong with "Compromise Of 1984," a complex melody with alternating soft and loud vocals. After that, the record turns into more or less typical pop punk emo songs. Not a bad offering—I'm looking forward to seeing what they'll do next. (JG)

Search and Rescue Records, PO Box 8260, Ann Arbor, MI 48107, www.searchandrescuerecords.com

Choleric — Weed Out The Weak, CD

Not very decisive on what style of metal they want to play, Choleric tries them all. Everything from rap metal, to death metal, to groove metal, and the list continues. Interesting side notes: Their guitarist's name is Coochiebeast, and the band was just awarded a Jagermeister sponsorship. Those two points alone should get them prime morning commute time on your local hit radio station. I have to give them credit on having decent lyrical topics, even though they lack follow-through. I just wish I had the ability to listen to this and not be reminded of the hundreds of Korn and Limp Bizkit clones out there that have yet to receive their Jagermeister sponsorships. (TK)

Self-Released, www.cholericmusic.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Brian Czarnik (BC)

SCREECHING WEASEL, *Pervo-Devo*. When all else fails, awake the mighty power of Chicago's punk gods Screeching Weasel. I am not even sure if they are still a band or not, but in my mind and in a lot of others, they stopped being a real band sometime between *Anthem For A New Tomorrow* and the record with the dogs on it. So my choice for this month's edition of "shit you should listen to..." is the famous 1991 7" from these bad boys called *Pervo-Devo*. Or better known as the 7 inch that has "I Wanna Be A Homosexual" on it. This ditty came to us packed with the comic zine *Teen Punks in Heat*. The cover shot of Ben blowing a gay punk wearing a "I Hate Ben Weasel" T-shirt is a classic, but the music is what made the record. Side "A" nus comes in with the legendary track, "I Wanna Be A Homosexual." Back when punk had a cool warped sense of humor, this upbeat pop-punk track is full of funny lyrics and a silly, lisp-ridden intro—the song that NOFX probably wish that they had written. Side "B" ondage has "She's Giving Me The Creeps" and the slow and slightly mundane Patsy Cline cover, "I Fall to Pieces." Everything you would expect from the Ben and the gang, all packed into one tiny record. Tongue in cheek humor, fast beats, singalong refrains, catchy guitar riffs, it is all here, and I own a copy. Ha ha ha!

Best bands this time: The Briefs, *Life of Pi*; The Beautys, *Broadside Beat*; and of course listening to the Outfield's *Play Deep* record from the '80s while I was sorting through the dumb promo sheets.

Clone Defects — Shapes Of Venus, CD

As advertised, the first listen left me feeling nauseated, but then it hit me: This is fucking genius, man. Old school rock 'n' roll that stays true to the Detroit sound everyone has been trying to recreate of late. It's like The White Stripes and the Briefs, only better. Really. (BN)

In The Red, PO Box 208, 1118 W. Magnolia Blvd. Burbank, CA 91506, www.intheredrecords.com

Closer Than Kin — The Machineries Of Breath, CD

Closer Than Kin take different styles of hardcore and punk—death metal riffage, E-chord chugs, quick paced old-school sounds, crew vocals, and cookie monster growls—and make a decent record out of it all, while at the same time reminding me that most metalcore bands sound indistinguishable to me. (MG)

Arctic Music Group, 400 SE Ninth St., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316, www.arcticmusicgroup.com

Clown Down — Living Alone, CD

There's no easy way for me to classify this—good for them, hard for me. As the notes I took say, "has some great moments." Upon subsequent listens, I feel like these moments are both longer and more numerous. It's rock for sure, what most people would probably classify as "indie rock," the domain inhabited by Sebadoh, Pavement, Built To Spill and the Archers Of Loaf. Kindred spirits for Clown Down, a band that seems dexterous in both slowed down and rockin' worlds. The guys can play, as the cohesion of the songs and their organic flow show. I especially like their style of dueling, midtempo single-note guitar parts that serve as accompaniment to the strong bass and drums ("Circuit Board," "Where The Temperature Is Colder"). Well done. Worth a listen. The nicest surprise of the issue. (KR)

The Sea Isle, 43-34 Piedmont Court, Morristown, NJ 07960, www.clowndown.com

Clusterfux — Thrash Mongrel, CD

Fast, loud, screechy, preachy and silly—but I don't think they mean to be. (DAL)

Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143 Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

Coachwhips — Get Your Body Next Ta Mine, CD

The Coachwhips serve up steaming hot buckets of rock 'n' roll mayhem. Lead vocalist John Dwyer (a Fort Thunder alum) sounds like Jon Spencer on a crap cell

phone connection, and the 14 tracks on *Next Ta Mine* have a writhing sexual energy full of grinding hips and smacking lips. Music to make out to. (JG)

Narnack Records, 381 Broadway, 4th Floor, Suite 3, New York, NY 10013, www.narnackrecords.com

Code Orange — "This is What We Make It," 7"

A wonderfully packaged red vinyl 7" in a screen-printed cardboard sleeve with lyrics pasted on the inside, Code Orange's music is strange mix of Modest Mouse melancholy harmonies and power violence vocals. That's right—the packaging is more interesting than the music. What a sham. (GBS)

Noise Maker! Records, 4023 N. Bartlett Ave., Shorewood, WI 53211, www.noise-maker.com

Companion Trio — Our Customs, CD

Deep down inside, you know there's a part of you that should love jazz, and it does, except for the kind of improvisational and experimental jazz that is all wanky and plunky and birdlike. You want to like it, in the same way that you want to learn to enjoy eating chard, but eventually the immature part of you gives in to Cheap Trick and Cocoa Puffs. Don't have a clue what I mean? That's what this record is like. It's an acquired taste that would appeal to fans of abstract instrumental jazz; dear *Punk Planet* readers, perhaps this is you. Alas, it is not me. (AT)

Mass Particles, www.massparticles.com

Cooters, The — The Moon Will Rise Again, CD

Shit-kickin' slapstick industrial hair metal laced with Clint Eastwood film dialogue and some prank calls. The Cooters wear their influences on their sleeves (er, overalls), owing plenty to both Ministry and The Butthole Surfers, without ever really matching either band's glory days. (PS)

T-Bones Records, PO Box 46793 West Hollywood, CA 90046

Corporation 187 — Perfection In Pain, CD

Thrash-metal at its best. The style is similar to The Haunted, but the lyrics are less scary (from what I could make out). From start to finish, this album never lets up, keeping insane energy, interspersed with rad metal solos when necessary. Sure to give your granny a heart attack. (TK)

Earache Records, Second Floor, 43 West 38th St, New York, NY 10018, www.earache.com

crack: we are rock / disciple a.d.

Crack: We Are Rock — Silent Fantasy, CDEP

Doom and gloom electro beats with (monotonous) songs about caves and sailors ("I am sailing along/ My soul is black, I am a sailor."). Get this if only because the record sleeve features some of the most ridiculous/pretentious photography ever. This has got to be a joke. Viva la electro! (JG)
Tigerbeat 6, PO Box 460922, San Francisco, CA 94146-0922, www.tigerbeat6.com

Crackheads, The — Drunk, 7"

Bad, generic punk with bad vocals and thoroughly unimpressive guitar parts. My roommate put the sentiment this way: "These guys are old enough to know they're wasting their time." (KR)
Dylaramma Records, 3218 Fullerton Ave., Apt. 26, Chicago, IL 60647-2533

Cut The Shit — Bored To Death EP, 7"

Fun, fast, East Coast hardcore with youth-crew choruses and songs about burning all of the trendy dance clubs to the ground. It is what it is: good, straight-up hardcore, old-school style. And I'm sure that 10 songs on one 7" is worth your \$3. (MG)
Gloom Records, PO Box 14253, Albany, NY 12212, www.gloomrecords.com

Cutface — [p]revolution, CD

With [p]revolution, Cutface seems to think it can fill in the void left in the wake of the demise of the Refused. Lifting Dennis Lyxzen's screech, Kristofer and Jon's guitar riffs, and *The Shape Of Punk To Come* lyric sheet manifesto, Cutface merely comes across as cheap imitators. The musicianship is closer to mid-'90s NYC hardcore, and the lyrical content, which reads like a failed attempt at Dadaist clip poetry, is chock full of clichés. While imitation is indeed a form of flattery, imagination and creativity play a part as well. *The Shape Of Punk To Come* is, without saying, a phenomenal record. When I want to listen to that, I will, not some second-rate Parisian knock offs. (GBS)
Stereosession Records, no contact info

D4, The — Rock'n'roll Motherfucker, 7"

Straight forward, garage rock 'n'roll from down under, the sound captured on this two-song 7" is not unlike the New Bomb Turks or the Vines. Yawn. (GBS)
SDZ records, 12 Av. Du Parc, 92170 Vanves, France, www.sdzrecords.fr.st

Reviewer Spotlight: Jen Dolan (JD)

PRIMA DONNAS, *Drugs Sex Discotheques*. Should the Prima Donnas be described as a concept band? Well, not exactly. Born in the mid-1990s in Austin, Texas, when, after sensing that there were enough bands playing hardcore, emo and punk, the boys took stock of their influences and declared "let there be synth-driven pop." An elaborate back story was crafted; according to the liner notes of *Drugs Sex Discotheques*, "Julius, 'Otto' and 'Nikki' supposedly met while orphans in a 'country far, far away (England)...'. The band affected British accents everywhere they went as the Prima Donnas (even when I'd run into them and I knew them for goodness sakes). Blend in plenty of attitude, total commitment to the concept, an acute sense of fashion and a love of bands like Kraftwerk, Joy Division and Depeche Mode. The result? Kids rocking that electro sound ages before electroclash would sweep the nation's indie youth in 2002. It would be easy to chalk up the Prima Donnas as fun 'joke' project if their songs weren't so fucking good. They announce the revolution on the very first track ("Nance Music Manifesto") and don't look back. Lyrically, the band is raw yet clever ("Rock was invented so the kids could get off/ No more helpings of Skin-So-Soft"). The music is diverse enough that the record never gets boring or repetitive. If only some "real" bands could be this good, I'd have a hang up for them now, as well.

Current obsessions: Cat Power, *You Are Free*; Born Against reissues; Cody Chestnutt, *The Headphone Masterpiece* and mix CDs made by various friends and loved ones made just for me.

Dahl, Jeff — Street Fighting Reptile, CD

Apparently, this is Jeff Dahl's (Angry Samoans) 21st solo album, and boy is it something else. The onesheet described this as "all-out trash 'n' glam rock and roll party," and I don't think I could have put it better myself. This is total punk rock 'n' roll party music that you could go on a crime spree to. (KM)
Steel Cage Records, PO Box 29247, Philadelphia, PA 19125, www.steelcagerecords.com

DC To Daylight — Xmas Murder '74, CD

A nice EP of sludgy indie rock, like Mudhoney meets Pavement. "Like A Man" is the standout track here, with its throbbing bass line and repetitive growl. The other songs are a little more mellow, but still good. The CD includes a cool multimedia section with videos and mp3s. (NS)
Urban Cheese, www.urbancheese.com

Dead Celebrities, The — Cleanup On Aisle 3, CD

When I reviewed this band's EP in *Punk Planet* #50, I noted that their poppy numbers worked much better than their A.O.D.-style jokey hardcore songs. The same is true on this CD, their debut full-length. Fortunately, they include more poppy songs than hardcore tracks here, and the production is excellent. (AE)
Fat Fish Records, PO Box 26953, St. Louis, MO 63118-9998, www.thedeadcelebrities.com

Dead Ones, The — S/T, 12"

Bilingual politically and socially charged hardcore from Sweden via Albany, N.Y.'s Gloom Records. Carrying the social/political banner of such acts as Against All Authority, Strike Anywhere and Ramallah, The Dead Ones deliver an ear-piercing assault with an even sharper message. Listen the fuck up. (BN)
Gloom Records, PO Box 14253, Albany, NY 12212, www.gloomrecords.com

Dead Things — Because Sometimes..., CD

Here's a fun band from North Carolina that reminds me of one of the best Canadian bands ever, in M. Blanket. Fast, guitar-driven punk rock with hyper drumming, the kind of music where the vocals are doing their best to catch up. And they mention Motorhead in a song! Cool! (BC)
Slave Magazine Records, PO Box 10093, Greensboro, NC 27404, www.slavemagazine.com

Deadstare / Far Left Limit — split, 7"

Deadstare's straight-up howling vocals and break-neck beats are pretty standard for thrash. Musically a carbon copy of Minor Threat, Far Left Limit's lyrical indictment of Australia's unjust immigration policies as well as the gang mentality that too often dogs the hardcore scene, however, makes this split worth it. (GBS)
Deplorable Recording Corporation Australia, PO Box 191, Balmain NSW 2041, www.deplorablerecordings.com; Gash Records, PO Box 236, Blackburn 3130, Victoria, Australia

Death By Stereo — Into The Valley Of Death, CD

With song titles like "I Wouldn't Piss In Your Ear If Your Brain Was On Fire," vocalist Efre Schulz's pseudo sports announcer one liners aren't the only laughable things here. Melodic hardcore with echoes of metal, *Into The Valley Of Death* is suitable for Maiden and Bane fans alike. (GBS)
Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

Deathbag — S/T, 7"

Super-fast hard core with metallic tendencies and the requisite screamed vocals. They take themselves and whatever message they have very seriously, as the fold out photo collage and "no thanks" list show. It's not good, but it's nice to know people still do this. (KR)
Hemorrhaging Loudness, PO Box 3019, Oswego, NY 13357; Get the Axe Records, PO Box 3019, Oswego, NY 13126, www.gettheaxerecords.com

Deerhoof — Apple O', CD

Electro-charged, eccentric pop with female vocals high enough to shatter glass. Blips, bleeps, weird melodies ("L'Amour Stories")—i.e., esoteric. That word means "understood or appreciated by only a few," and I'm afraid I fall out of that select few. KRS seems infatuated with this low-fi quasi-electronic sound these days. (KR)
Kill Rock Stars, 120 NE State, #418, Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

Disciple A.D. — The Revelation, CD

This some of the toughest sounding Jesus music around. Severely heavy, metal style, tough guy hXc. Kind of like VOD or Strecharm Strong. Praying with your finger pointing into the air. (DM)
Triple Crown Records, 331 West 57th St. PMB 472, New York, NY 10019, www.triplecrownrecords.com

**Dolorous Canter – The Alpha Project, CDEP**

I absolutely hate it when a good record is ruined by a piss-poor recording, which is exactly the case with this EP. The vocals drown out, the bass nearly blows my speakers, and the guitars get lost in the shuffle. If this was done purposely, especially the sound levels, it was a really bad idea that almost ruined the album. Had the recording, mixing and producing been of even below-average quality, I'd have been ranting and raving about Chicago's best-kept secret. Fuck it, I'll do it anyway. Despite the quality of the recording, the talent these guys possess is still clearly visible. Their brand of emotional post-hardcore is a refreshing break from that typical Chicago sound. The songs all take a long time to evolve into a furious mix of structured chaos capped by the edgy vocals. Well-written lyrics and nice packaging round out a good release that could've been so much more. I can't wait to hear a proper recording and witness the secret turn into hype. (BN)
Schoolcraft Records, 1529 W. Farwell Ave. #1N, Chicago, IL 60626, www.schoolcraftrecords.com

Downing Street – The Whole Experience, CD

Good straight-up punk rock with some driving bass lines and a heavy dual guitar sound. It's basically a well-integrated mix of street punk and pure punk rock. I can't help but think of Reducers SF, Rancid and the Offspring. Already good, this band has the tools to achieve greatness. (BN)
Swinging Arms Productions, PO Box 16241 Rocky River, OH 4416-0241, www.swingingarmproductions.com

Dream Is Dead, The – Letter Of Resignation, CDEP

Former members of Burn It Down, Harikari and Sutek Conspiracy are together with a more straightforward and brutal version of hardcore that's putting Indianapolis back on the hardcore map. This is very tight. My favorite of the five tracks on this EP has to be the cover of Poison Idea's "Just To Get Away." (TK)
What Else Records, PO Box 1211, Columbus, IN 47202, www.whatelserecords.com

Dropsonic – The Big Nothing, CD

This reminds me of the type of band that plays classic rock covers in small bars. Lots of twangy guitar lines and blues solos. The singer has a voice similar to Thom Yorke, which makes this all the more weird. (KM)
54° 40' Or Fight, PO Box 1601, Acme, MI 49610, www.fiftyfourfortyfight.com

Dub Narcotic Sound System – Hand Clappin', CDEP

This record is a gift from heaven. What can I say? I'm a huge fan of garage jazz, cheeky lyrics, hot voices and incredibly seductive bass lines. The EP kicks off with the groovily cute "Hand Clappin'," a song so hip it deserves a fat bouquet of chocolate roses just for existing in the minds of these geniuses. "Petrolbuzz (Version)" spins around itself like some smooth-talking bloke Sade only dreams about. "Sabley Goodness" slides through the speakers with the liquid ease of Heather Dunn's childish meanderings. And the lovely "Mega-Clash (Version)" finishes up the Dub experience with a psychedelic stew of eerie goodness and trippy drumbeats good enough to skip kittenishly to at some embarrassingly public place like the mall. Beware where you take this multifaceted gem, unless you're aiming to star in a Spike Jonz video of course. Then Dub's got yer ass covered swell. (SP)
K Records, Box 7154, Olympia, WA, 98507, www.krecords.com

Durga – Earn Your Redwings Morman, 7"

Chaotic hardcore from San Diego complete with evil circus keyboards and abrasive female vocals. There are some groovy parts here and there, but for the most part this didn't grab me. (KM)
Transgalactic Ladder, PO Box 104, Wilmington, CA 90748

88, The – Kind Of Light, CD

This LA-based band incorporates classic rock elements with bubbly élan and a twist of lime. *Kind Of Light* stands as a decent record with cool song titles ("Elbow Blues") and neat lyrics like "big fat gob of your heart." And their baggy suits ain't too shabby, either. (SP)
EMK Records, 4872 Topanga Cyn. Blvd. #302, Woodland Hills, CA 91364

El Guapo – Fake French, CD

Upbeat art punk heavy on synth beats and sounds, but they also incorporate some standard instruments as well as accordion and oboe. The vocals are pleasant and playful at times. Catchy enough, but I'm not sure I'm ready to turn Dischord over to the white-belt kids just yet. (NS)
Dischord, 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington DC, 20007 www.dischord.com

Eleventeen – In The Air, CD

I'd write a better review of this if I weren't so ambivalent about it. On one hand, Eleventeen's poppy post-punk with excellent vocals is undeni-

ably catchy (Shades Apart?). On the other, it sounds cheesy to me (last track). All of it sounds great recorded thanks to J. Robbins. (KR)
Sessions Records, 60 Old El Pueblo Road, Scotts Valley, CA 95066, www.sessionsrecords.com

Erosion – S/T, 7"

Three pretty good, professional-sounding, garage-rock ditties. Jangling guitars, peppy beats and howling vocals make up this 7". "Coma" is the best song with catchy music and odd lyrics of longing. Good tavern rock 'n' roll. (NS)
Pseudo Recordings, PO Box 522348, Salt Lake City, UT 84152-2348 www.pseudorecordings.com

F-Minus – Wake Up Screaming, CD

Only Steve Albini could take a noisy, gutter punk act like F-Minus and make a clear recording without losing the band's edge. With F-Minus' familiar 4/4 beats banged out like a group of 14-year-olds just learning to play, Albini's ability to make such a transparent record garners merit in itself. (GBS)
Hellcat Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.hell-cat.com

Fabulous Disaster – Panty Raid!, CD

I guess this band made a big splash with their debut record. I need to hear it, because after listening to this pop-punk gem, I can now say Fabulous Disaster is the best lesbian punk band of ALL TIME! Fourteen killer punk tunes. (BC)
Pink & Black Records, PO Box 190516, San Francisco, CA 94119, www.pinkandblack.com

Facade Burned Black – S/T, CD

Raw, pummeling hardcore from these Norfolkers. Yelled vocals over fast, metallic guitars, backed by great rhythmic drum blasts. Sometimes they add more experimental moments and some soft interludes, but then it's back to the business at hand. Way more engaging than similar bands on Revelation or Equal Vision these days. (NS)
Amendment, 580 Nansemond Cres., Portsmouth, VA 23707 www.angelfire.com/punk/amendment

Fairview – We'll Dodge It On The Way Back + Extras, CD

It's odd that the "bonus tracks" outnumber the "real" tracks. The onesheet recommends it for fans of the Get Up Kids. Hey, they said it, not me. But it's the truth: really catchy, emoish, hook-laden, a little cheesy. Features a video, some acoustic songs and a few demo tracks. (KR)
Sidecho Records, 7923 Warner Ave., Ste. K, Huntington Beach, CA 92647

Reviewer Spotlight: Art Ettinger (AE)

THE WRETCHED ONES, *Go To Work*. Old people just don't play enough punk rock, so it's refreshing to have bands like The Wretched Ones out there to make punks having growing pains realize that you can still play even as you approach AARP eligibility. The Wretched Ones formed from the ashes of the underrated hardcore band The Burnt. They slowed down from their old-school hardcore roots, piled on an oi influence and began writing some of the funnier and catchier drinking/work songs ever recorded. Their debut self-titled album is a classic in its own right, but their second album *Go To Work* is even stronger. Songs such as "I'm Just Doing My Job," "The Last Song" and "That's Why I Drink Beer" display working class angst with a sense of humor. It sticks in your head after even one quick listen. Still available on vinyl from Scumfuck Tradition in Germany and on CD from Headache Records, *Go To Work* is one slab of vinyl that won't age no matter how old the individuals who created it become.

I've also been getting off on: Eu's Arse, 1981-1985; The Bodies, *Fire-Power Is Our Business*; The Sussed, *Sussed Out*; ANTISEEN, *All Live, No Jive: Destructo Wehrmacht*; and The Spits, *S/T*.

Fall Out Boy - Fall Out Boy's Evening Out With Your Girlfriend, CD

Chicago's answer to New Found Glory, Fall Out Boy play that new fangled pop-punk with an emo edge (or dulling, depending on your perspective). Song titles including "Pretty In Punk" and "Parker Lewis Can't Lose (But I'm Going to Give It My Best Shot)." Not a total embarrassment, but close. (AE) Uprising Records, PO Box 490, Laguna Beach, CA 92652, www.falloutboyrock.com

Favorite Atomic Hero - Who Will Save You Now?, CD

There will always be power pop. Its sound—slightly muted power chords, a beat, sugary harmonies and meaningless lyrics—re-emerges when rock 'n' roll is in a lull. Thus, there will always be bands like Favorite Atomic Hero and their records will continue to be boring and predictable. (GBS) Lonesome Recordings, PO Box 15297, Boston, MA 02215

Fed By Fiction - These Lives Crash on Three, CD

I was lucky to see Fed By Fiction back when I lived in Wisconsin, and they were an amazingly entertaining live band. There were so many people jumping around, all level with the band, that I couldn't tell who was really in the band. Upon first listen, the CD was a bit of a disappointment given their insane live shows, but after the third listen, I was hooked. I'm now on my 14th, I think. They mix male/female screamed/clean vocals with complex rhythm changes and a few hooks thrown in every once in a while. It makes for a great listen over and over again. (TK) PO Box 260116, Madison, WI 53726-0116, www.fedbyfiction.net

Fels, Jerry - I've Made My Bed And Now I'm Lying In It, CD

Almost Lo-Fi, but not quite, Jerry Fels is more of a curious mix between Chris Knox and Atom, minus the Package. I should point out that Jerry plays every instrument, does all the lead and backing vocals and produces each song. That's always a refreshing touch in these days of computerized vocals and lip-sync prowess. The tongue-in-cheek tracks are brilliant, but when they take a turn for the serious, the shtick gets old quick. It's almost as if Jerry has two personalities: the witty, sarcastic

satirist and the heavily depressed, suicidal spurned lover. More of the fast, funny and quirky and less of the "lonely boy," and the next record will be a complete hit. (BN)

Nobody's Favorite Records, 14 Winslow Ave., #6, Somerville MA 02144, www.nobodysfavoritere-cords.com

Few, The - S/T, CD

Sad, guitar-driven indie pop out of Athens, complete with piano, keyboards and handclaps. It's not much more than boring quiet-rock in my eyes, but this record may be well received by Death Cab For Cutie, Bright Eyes and Pedro The Lion types. (MG) PSB Records, Attn: Chris Nilsson, 265 Santa Helena, #110, Solana Beach, CA 92075, www.psbrecords.com

Fiesel - The Ruins Of This Life, CD

Fiesel's debut LP is a sort of syncretic, post-hard-core, taking far-flung influences and blending them. The sounds are gloomy: sometimes heavy, plodding, distorted, at other times exploding with a compression change into a purposefully higher fidelity sound, a fast tempo, and hardcore vocals. (JS) The Losing Blueprint Records, 12A Day St., Waltham, MA 02453, www.losingblueprint.com

Fivespeed - Trade In Your Halo, CD

Fivespeed play alternative rock with an emo edge. Radio-friendly, emotional, driving, melodic, Jimmy Eat World, Nickelback, blah, blah, blah. Sounds like everything I hate about music these days. (MG) Sunset Alliance, 2022 N. 15th Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85007, www.sunsetalliance.net

Fizzle Like A Flood - Flash Paper Queen, CD

I'm unexpectedly blown away: This little gem of an album sang to me and made me its friend with 11 gentle, reflective, literate songs. The first track, the single, "Like Wind Like Rain," is the most produced, sounding something like the Delgados crossed with Yoshimi-era Flaming Lips. But the rest is the essence of great indie music: stripped-down, lo-fi, quirky, honest, acoustic-sounding folk-pop. In this case, it's wispy, layered and shoegazer-y, drenched in minor chords and emotional intensity, with clever wordplay. From Omaha, Neb., Fizzle is talented multi-instrumentalist Doug Kabourek (who's mixed albums by

the Faint); Kabourek plays guitar, keys, drums and theremin, and programs. Mostly four- and eight-track bedroom recordings, these songs are great for lonesome late nights alone and contemplative walks in the rain kicking up puddles with the dog, who is always loyal, for company. Written "By Doug for Julie," *Flash Paper Queen* made me, um, teary. Folks who dig the Microphones will enjoy this stirring album, which raises an important question: When a voice with beauty and style sings what are instant chestnuts, is production important? Mmm, maybe no. (JS) Ernest Jennings Record Co., 906 Summit Ave., Jersey City, NJ 07307, www.fizzlelikeaflood.com

Flaming Sideburns - Save Rock 'N' Roll, CD

I am a sucker for bands that proudly wear their influences on their sleeves. Listening to the Flaming Sideburns, it is easy to hear the MC5, Stooges, Rolling Stones, Who, and even some Velvets in there for good measure. This is slick stuff, recorded with many tracks and overdubs that add just the right spices to the mix. It would be easy to mention other Scandinavian bands as contemporaries, but it isn't necessary because the Flaming Sideburns second full-length, *Save Rock 'N' Roll*, is such a damn gem that it stands on its own. You can pick up their handful of singles and split 10" with the Hellacopters as well, but this is their crown jewel. The numerous European tours have obviously tightened the Flaming Sideburns into a well-tuned machine. It has been a few years since I have heard such straight-forward rock 'n' roll that still felt fresh enough to keep. The Hives were probably the last band. (Did I just mention a second Scandinavian band when I wasn't going to?) (EA) Jetset Records, 67 Vestry Street, NY, NY 10013, www.jetsetrecords.com

Format, The - EP, CD

Slick, catchy emo pop. Sweet, but not syrupy. These two fellows have a knack for songwriting. Add to that poppy acoustic guitars, keyboards, drum-machine beats and plenty of harmonies, and you've got a TRL sensation waiting to happen. With a forthcoming major-label record, that might not be far off. (NS) Western Tread Records, PO Box 661, Tempe, AZ 85280, www.westerntread.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Melissa Geils (MG)

HEAVEN 17, *Penthouse And Pavement*. Is anyone else noticing a time warp lately? The bloom of 1980s resurgence mania, from '80s dance parties to electropunk, and new wave fashion? As the world and its goings-on get exceedingly tougher and scarier to deal with (especially for lefty-ended, socially conscious individuals), it seems as if a lot of punk/indie kids are wrapped up in the excess of coke/alcohol habits and club-going bandaids. The current war-addled environment, and the criminal power-mongering policies of the U.S., is being submerged by ElectroClash fever and party-hopping indie kids in this "alternative" subcultural universe! Of course, I love it, as '80s pop culture nostalgia will be in my heart forever. And what better record to have playing at the nearest "forget about reality" dance party than Heaven 17's *Penthouse And Pavement*? Hot dance beats and politics that mirror those of the present. The big hit on this record, "(We Don't Need This) Fascist Groove Thang," is by far the best track; not just a killer dancefloor tune, it encourages people to dance away the fascism of the times: "Democrats are out of power/ Across that Great Wide Ocean/ Reagan's [read: Bush] president elect/ fascist god in motion... Come out of your house and dance your dance/ shake that fascist groove thang." And this is what is "punk" about the record: getting the masses to shake their groove thangs to subversive lefty political messages! Heaven 17 made protest music, '80s dance style, which is back on its way to being the protest music of now.

Damn good records as of late: Watchers, *To The Rooftops*; Ted Leo, *Hearts Of Oak*; Soviet, *We Are Eyes, We Are Builders*; Black Eyes, *s/t*; Cursive, *The Ugly Organ*.



Fortunato – S/T, CDEP

I wish there were more songs on this EP. It's almost as if Ian Mackaye joined Sugar and released four more songs before Bob Mould started his solo project. Fans of Fugazi and Husker Du take note. This is so refreshing. A great change from the bland music being mass produced recently. (TK) Chunksaah PO Box 974 New Brunswick, NJ 08903

Full White Drag – The Independence, CD

Mellow rock anthems, like Queen on Quaaludes. There's an odd disjunction with the cinematic, ambitious scope of the music and the singer's Social Distortion-flavored constipation. Find a latrine, do your business, and play faster. (DAL) Inner-Flight Records, PO Box 1722, Radio City Station, NY, NY 10101

Generators, The – From Rust To Ruin, CD

A collection of out-of-print and rare material from this classic street-punk quartet. Fast, aggressive punk rock circa 1977 with snotty vocals and a lead guitar to die for. The sing-along choruses shine as they did on The Generators TKO full-length *Tyranny*. A must for street-punk aficionados. (BN) TKO Records, 3126 W. Cary St. #303, Richmond, VA 23221, www.tkorecords.com

German Art Student, The – Kissing By The Superconductor, CD

If you're into indie rock featuring quirky lyrics about high school science teachers, boyfriends that look like Steve Vai, uber-nerds in love and following crappy directions, then jeepers, this is your favorite band. Upbeat guitars and sloppy voices abound. Oh yeah, and there's a song about crazy Civil War Re-enactors, too. (SP) Dharmakayamusic, 520 University Ave., Suite 365, Madison, WI 53703, www.dharmakayamusic.com

Gingersol – The Trainwreck Is Behind You, CD

Sparkling, pretty pop, Americana-style. The Beach Boys harmonies in "Where Do I Stand" are smooth without sounding too retro; subtle bells in "Over the Handlebars" are perfectly placed. Fans of *Summerteeth*-era Wilco would enjoy this. (AT) Rubric, 75 Leonard St., New York, NY 10013, www.rubricrecords.com

Gist – Art is Now Human, CD

From Washington, D.C., this heavy, mathy, experimental post-rock band's first full-length CD plays with constantly changing tempos and draws on variegated sounds from hardcore to classic rock and from jazz to rap. (JS) Red Stapler Records, 6903 Ridgedale Court, McLean, VA 22101, www.gistmusic.net

Reviewer Spotlight: Julie Gerstein (JG)

THE TWIN ATLAS, *Bring Along The Weather*. Those outside of the Philly tri-state area may not have heard of The Twin Atlas or its sister bands, Lenola and Mazarin. Even those geographically inclined and in-the-know may not be familiar with Lucas Zaleski and Sean Byrne's moody and beautiful music. Zaleski, who now calls NYC home, and Byrne, who's played drummer for Lenola, Mazarin and Matt Pond PA, write lilting and gentle songs, filled with soft-spoken vocals and twangy-sweet guitars. The pair, who met while doing the academic thing at the University of Delaware in the mid-'90s, layer basic collaborations and improvisations with more complex melodies and an arsenal of eccentric and warm instrumentation. After recording two beautiful but over-long releases (*Kitchen U.S.A.* and the aptly titled *Philadelphia Parking Authority Must Die*), the pair return with *Bring Along The Weather*, a shorter and more refined record, replete with even more subtle pop gems. The Twin Atlas continue to amaze.

In rotation: Blackstar; Modest Mouse Lonesome Crowded West; Erlend Oye Unrest.

Glass Candy – Love Love Love, CD

More new wave-y goth rock out of Portland, Ore. Singer Ida manages to sound a little bit like Debbie Harry and a little bit like Wendy O. Overall, not a bad record. (JG) Troubleman Unlimited, 16 Willow St., Bayonne, NJ 07002, www.troublemanunlimited.com

Glenn's Army – Major Threat CD

These Rhode Islanders have the pop-punk formula down: a nasally, whiny singer, a throaty backup singer, manic drums and songs about adolescent angst. Fortunately, they pull off their amusingly immature songs with a nudge, a wink and an abundance of energy. Silly and fun. (AT) Irresponsible Records, 115 Avenue B, Woonsocket, RI 02895, www.irresponsiblerecords.com

Global Threat, A – Earache/Pass The Time, CDEP

Highly energetic hardcore with plenty of chances to chant along with the chorus. Their songs are melodic, but keep with the '80s East Coast style for the most part. This is a solid release, so I hope there's more to come in the future. (TK) Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

Goodwill, The – That Was A Moment, CD

As this issue hits stands, this wuss-core band from Long Island will be playing the Radio Active stage on some Warped Tour dates. This CD is distinguished from today's glut of complex emo-pop through its heightened songwriting and undeniable frantic energy. (AE) Negative Progression Records, PO Box 193158, San Francisco, CA 94119, www.negativeprogression.com

Gorg – Songmaster, 7"

Hilarious, acoustic punk rock backed by audience participation. Apparently born out of impromptu performances at parties, Gorg brings humor into political convictions with songs like "Ronald Reagan's Dead" and "Poop Song," the latter of which asks why all people can't get along based on shared human commonalities, such as the need to poop. (MG) World Domination Corporation, PO Box 21440, Washington DC, 20009-0940, www.worlddominationcorporation.com

Grand Ulena – Gateway To Dignity, CD

Complete instrumental mayhem, like an experimental sonic jam record put through a shredder and then scotch-taped back together, like math without the rock. They display skill and hints of

atmosphere, but it's so scattered and frenetic it's inaccessible for, I'd imagine, all but the most hardcore melody-haters. (DAL) Family Vineyard, PO Box 2161, Bloomington, IN, 47402, www.family-vineyard.com

Green Rode Shotgun – Bang, CD

When The New Pornographers became 2000's critical darlings, it was inevitable that the bar would be raised for indie rock. Green Rode Shotgun continue the rootsy, Pixies-influenced pop with over-the-top melodies, well-placed harmonies and a tight performance. Like *Mass Romantic*, *Bang* is consistent throughout with little flaws. (VC) www.greenrodeshotgun.com

Guitar Wolf – UFO Romantics, CD

Their straightforward punk takes the Ramones formula, roughs it up and turns out rather well in the end. As a bonus, the CD offers a lengthy Quicktime video of a live set—the energy is remarkable. Unless you speak Japanese, the lyrics will be lost. (But sometimes that's fun, isn't it?) (AT) Narnack Records, www.narnackrecords.com

Hablan Por La Espalda – Le Petit Detail Qui Change Tout, CD

Wow, great hardcore. The singer yelps from the heart, the guitars give knife-sharp breakdowns, and the lyrics remain poetic even in English translation. All nine songs sound cohesive, yet each is detailed enough to sound drastically different from the others. (AT) Sniffing, cc3288 (1000) Buenos Aires, Argentina, www.hablanporlaespalda.cjb.net

Ham Steak – I Think Therefore I Ham, CD

Ham Steak is a funny and endearing acoustic folk-rock one-man show. A less produced and smarter version They Might Be Giants, this clever little album is good for a chuckle or two. This stuff actually rocks—in a coffee house open mic night sort of way. (AE) Self-released, www.rumproast.com/hamsteak

He Who Corrupts / Don't Worry About It – split CD

Here is a very unlikely combination of bands for a split release. He Who Corrupts erupts from their first track with blast beats and screaming on their first two tracks. On the third and final track, they play mockingly poppy punk with silly lyrics about making money. Don't Worry About It is straight up pop-punk, and it is a huge contrast from the first three tracks. Both bands are good at what they do, but sound a bit strange on the same disk. (TK) Walk in Cold Records, 8408 Lakeside Drive, Downers Grove, IL 60516, www.dwai.org

Hello Amsterdam – How Are You?, CD

Sappy emo/indie rock with a slightly odd vocalist. The music is pretty good, but nothing really sets them apart. Maybe Deep Elm fans should check them out. (NS)

Spy Hop, 353 W. Pierpont Ave. #200, Salt Lake City, UT 84101 www.spyhop.org

Henry Flat's Open Sore – Patmos Or Bust, 7"

Gotta love a band with a song called "Love Makes You Fat." Pretty gross band name, though, guys. Not to mention unsanitary. Kind of what you would expect from such contrarian, bizarro titles—strange. (DAL)

Wrench Records, BCM Box 4049, London WC1N 3XX

Herv — Warmduscher, 7"

Heavily ambient, blippity-bloppity stuff released on heavy (70 gram!) vinyl. Why do depressants when you can listen to this record? (JG)
Compactisc, 64 Cowper Road, Rathmines, Dublin 6, Ireland, www.compactisc.net

Holland, Jolie — Catalpa, CD

With her flute-like, fluttering, multi-octave, voice, Jolie Holland sings spooky lullabies that hush and charm. On her solo Americana debut, *Catalpa*, on songs like "The Littlest Birds (Sing the Prettiest Songs)," her idiosyncratic style intones old-timey and traditional folk à la the Carter Sisters, neo-traditionalists like Gillian Welch, jazzy blues crooner Billie Holiday and pre-war country blues artists like Memphis Minnie. She plays "anything stringed," (piano, fiddle, guitar, banjo, ukulele), and whistles in perfect pitch. And she's the real McCoy: Texas-bred, Holland has twin great-uncles who were well known in the western swing scene and played with Willie Nelson and the Dixie Chicks' great-aunt. She founded the homespun, close harmonic group, the Be Good Tanyas, and her celebrity fans include folkie Victoria Williams and bluesman Paul Pena. Listen to this lady and support her! (JS)
Self-released, www.jolieholland.com

Hollywood Hate! - Product Of Our Environment, CD

Supergroups are often an unwelcome annoyance, but Hollywood Hate is an interesting exception to the supergroup rule in that it brings together people from relatively disparate-sounding bands: Mark HateMark of The Living End on lead guitar, Mark Ho of Shocking Truth on bass, Suzy Homewrecker

of Snap-Her on drums, Pensacola Bob of Blount on rhythm guitar and Scott Wilkins of Verbal Abuse and Electric Frankenstein on vocals. Fans of The Stitches will cream their jeans over this band, as will fans of '80s skate punk. *Product Of Our Environment* has an old feel to it, and not just because it's played by old people. This album is a throwback to midtem-po oddball '80s hardcore, replete with weird story-book-style lyrics. What's to hate? (AE)
TKO Records, 3216 W. Cary St. #303, Richmond, VA 23221, www.tkorecords.com

Homage To Catalonia – We're OK, We're OK, CDEP

Weepy-eyed singer/songwriter, accompanied by only a guitar and a rare guest instrumentalist, mixes both politics and love, or is that longing for the love, of a better world politically. Includes a Tracy Chapman cover if that helps. (AS)
Amor y Lucha Records, P.O. Box 1217, Riverdale, MD 20738-1217, www.amorylucha.org

Honeyshop Screammers, The – Going Out Dancing, CD

This six-song discography collects the recorded material of this two-tone ska band. Even though this is a tad sugarcoated, they do it up right. It's fun and a good listen. Dare I even say fun for the whole family? I do! I do! (DM)
Do The Dog Music, 26A Craven Rd. Newbury Berkshire RG14 5NE England, www.dothedog.com

Intima, The – Peril & Panic, CD

The materials with this Portland band's new record liken their dramatic tuneage to the folk music of an insurgent Eastern European gypsy populace. They do have a really sweeping, cinematic sound that makes you want to follow them into an epic struggle, regardless of whether you share their disdain for industrial society, U.S. imperialism, the commoditization of culture, the destruction of the environment or the soul-sucking detritus of sprawl. Or maybe you think they're spot on, but you find their album-jacket proselytizing pretentious and cringe-worthy. Point is, you'll still get all juiced up listening to this complex, layered, highly intelligent and relentlessly atmospheric record. It's wonderfully paranoid, and it'll have you pumping your fists (perhaps while clenching Mao's Little Red Book or the Unabomber Manifesto), but also looking over your shoulder as you take the nearest back alley. (DAL)
Slow Dance, PO Box 30375, Portland, OR, 97294, www.slowdance.com

Intro5pect —S/T, CD

The Dead Kennedys and Roni Size walk into a bar. Roni is wearing a totally hot outfit, and the Dead Kennedys are eyeing Roni up from across the room. Through a tequila and Pabst-fueled haze, Roni and the DKs meet and fuck in the bathroom. Nine months later, INTRO5PECT is born. A custody battle ensues and Intro5pect ends up a ward of the state. Go figure. (JG)
A-F Records, Po Box 71266, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, www.a-frecords.com

Inventing Edward - We've Met An Impasse (By Midnight We'll Be Naked), CD

Inventing Edward is all about swirly, distorted noise and jaded vocals. IE's best songs display a narrative nature in which the mundane occurrences of everyday life morph into almost beautiful yarns. Some advice though, despite band name's origin: Starting a record with Winona Ryder in *Edward Scissorhands* is a bad idea. (SP)
Substandard Records, PO Box 310, Berkeley, CA 94701, www.substandard.com

Jabe — Drama City, 2xCD

Beware of the hootin' & hollerin' first track, because shortly after it the record nosedives into a radio-friendly abyss of quasi-country bar rock. When Jabe works, he sounds like the Old 97's. When he doesn't work, he sounds like Michael McDermott, whose "folksy" music sounds like Dave Matthews. Beware. (KR)
Xenu, 34 W. 17th St., Fifth Floor, New York, NY 10011

Jet Black Summer – The Ladder Of Divine Ascent, CD

More screamo that's all the rage these days (Thursday, Sparta). There's more singing than screaming, which is nice, but the vocals are mostly strained and often off-key. It's not bad; there's a lot of power, but nothing's really jumping out at me. Neither great nor terrible, a solid middle. (KR)
Lakeshore Records, 5555 Melrose Ave., Gloria Swanson Bldg., #2, Los Angeles, CA 90038

Judah Johnson — Kisses and Interrogation, CD

Daniel Johnson, singer/songwriter for Judah Johnson, sounds a hell of a lot like Michael Penn and Duncan Sheik. The 15 songs on *Interrogation* range from harpy Beatlesque melodies to raucous showtune rockers. Destined for VH-1. (JG)
Flameshovel Records, 1658 N. Milwaukee, # 276, Chicago, IL 60647, www.flameshovel.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Tim Kuehl (TK)

ROCKET FROM THE TOMBS, *The Day the Earth Met...* I still remember the first time I heard a Rocket From The Tombs song. It was being sung by Axl Rose on Guns N' Roses' *Spaghetti Incident* cover CD. "Ain't It Fun" stuck in my head for days on end. I had to find out who originally wrote it. The Dead Boys received full writing credit in the liner notes, which I found out was only partially true once I purchased this CD. RFTT existed for only a little over a year, but spawned two of the most famous punk bands of all time: The Dead Boys and Pere Ubu. (Pere Ubu is still playing music and recently ended a tour.) All of these songs were written in the early '70s by Dave Thomas and Peter Laughner, but most of them are being heard for the first time on this record because they were never released. The recording is a little raw, but it gives more than it takes away from the music. Considering this is a CD full of demo songs and live tracks, it is a pretty remarkable mix. The songs themselves are incredible: "Sonic Reducer," "30 Seconds Over Tokyo," "So Cold" and "Final Solution" are really killer tracks, even though every song is incredible. It comes on a thick double LP if you are a collector. Nineteen astounding tracks for 26 years of waiting. You can't pass this up.

What I'm listening to right now: Dead Things, *Because Sometimes You Just Want To Ride Your Bike To The Show* (my new favorite band); You And I, Discography; V/A, *Down In Front* (Aaron Cometbus comp).



John Brown's Army — Who Fucked The Culture Up?, CD

Hardcore bands are sampling Baba O'Reilly nowadays? Fast hardcore with gruff vocals that begins and ends with feedback in every song. This has certainly fallen into the wrong hands, as I can't muster up enough venom to dismiss this record, but there's nothing here that really stands out. (PS) www.gloomrecords.com

♫ Kid Brother Collective — Highway Miles, CD

And now for something completely different: a new emo record that's actually good? That actually means something? That actually works? You fucking bet. Kid Brother Collective are a direct offspring of Camber and Rival Schools, a fact punctuated by the sweet, slowly building melodies, emotional vocals that adapt well to each song and poignant messages. The vocals vary between softly spoken and screamed, but never seem trite, a flaw that most of the recent emo releases can't seem to avoid. The songs are all guitar-driven, but rely on the drums to infuse the angry hardcore sound. This sporadic punchiness really mixes up the sound, giving *Highway Miles* a generous dose of originality. Kid Brother Collective is a picture of everything that is great about emo, and it wouldn't be at all surprising to see Deep Elm giving these guys a call in the near future. (BN)

One Day Savior, PO Box 372, Williston Park, NY 11596, www.onedaysavior.com

♫ Kill Pill, The — Outside These City Walls, CDEP

Whoa...members of the late, controversial, soap-box-politics metallic hardcore outfit Racetractor reunite with other hardcore figures as a hip, International Noise Conspiracy- and MC5-worshipping rock 'n' roll band. Jumping on the garage-rock revival bandwagon in order to spread the words of revolution in a more danceable way, these guys are doing less preaching and more testifying. It seems as if they're loosening up a bit in their adulthood. This is a good debut; the fairly basic rock formula is sugared up a little with hooks and dance-producing grooves, and the songs are political without being annoyingly nagging (much in the style of I.N.C.), but unfortunately, The Kill Pill have got a ways to go musically before reaching "rock 'n' roll revolutionaries" status. (MG) Uprising Records, PO Box 42259, Philadelphia, PA 19104, www.uprisingrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Dan Laidman (DAL)

ANGRY SAMOANS, *Back From Samoa*. These guys deserve a place in the punk pantheon if for no other reason than they committed the ultimate act of rock self-destruction. No, not Sid Vicious-style self-destruction, something more, well, not subtle, exactly, but less bloody. At a moment in the early 1980s when KROQ's Rodney Bingenheimer was the kingmaker of LA punk rock, the Angry Samoans burst onto the scene and immediately recorded a profane song tearing into the powerful DJ. Known more for his bowl haircut and dopey voice than his sense of humor, Rodney didn't take it well, and the Samoans were exiled from the inner circles of LA punkdom. They still managed to make a couple exemplary albums, and *Back From Samoa* stands out for its strangeness and its unbelievably tight, virtuoso punk musicianship, something I think has been overlooked. Of course, their humor ranged from sharp and witty to offensive and stupid, and that hasn't been good for their reputation. There is no excuse for the homophobia and sexism they often displayed, and it can't all be shrugged off in the name of irony. But I firmly believe "Lights Out" stands as one of the greatest punk songs of all time ("everything looks better when the world is black/ grab a fork and make a first attack/ lights out!") and that this band can't be ignored. And hell, frontman Mike Saunders, aka Metal Mike, was also the rock critic who coined the term "heavy metal."

Lately I'm listening to: Pretty Girls Make Graves, the new Jets to Brazil, Scene Creamers, Hot Snakes, Drive Like Jehu reissue.

Kiss Me Deadly — Travel Light, CD

No trace of Lita Ford here, son. Just midtempo punkindiememo that's varied and layered enough to be musically interesting, but still seems lacking. It could be that the vocals come off as either faint and flat or, when the music gets intense, rough and grating. (DAL) Blue Skies Turn Black, 214 Thornhill, D.D.O., QC, H9G 1P7, Canada, www.blueskiesturnblack.com

Kissing Chaos — Enter With A Bullet, CDEP

Melodic post-hardcore, Kissing Chaos' five-song debut EP is strong mix of Foo Fighter harmonies and late '90s screaming emo dynamics. It's heavy enough to pack a small club party and streamlined enough for radio support. The band features members of Sparta, which might garner some attention as well. (GBS) Fueled By Ramen, PO Box 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604, www.fueledbyramen.com

Kowalskis, The / Lulabelles, The — split, 7"

Originally released by a German all-lady label, this split features The Kowalskis, who romp around like a female-fronted version of the Ramones, and the Lulabelles, whose singer Mary Ann sounds like a tough-as-nails version of The Softies' Rose Melberg. She shines especially bright on "Goddamn Attitude." (JG) Thunderbaby Records, Hasselsstr. 120-40599, Dusseldorf Germany, www.thunderbaby.de

Lamplighter — A Three Point Perspective, CD

Well done fusion of krautrock (late period Can or Residents), electronic experimentation and big beats (kinda like newer Flaming Lips) that produces a soothing, but nearly new age, vibe. Unfortunately, like too many experimental releases, the 14 tracks here are all instrumentals. (AS) Woodson Lateral Records, 2112 S. Spokane St., Seattle, WA 98144, www.woodsonlateral.com

Laptop - Don't Try This At Home, CD

This third album by a silly man and his mother-board is torturously geeky and exasperating. It sounds like Leonard Cohen playing dueling banjos with Elvis Costello through some tech guy's computer. No good time to be had here. (AE) Gammon Records, 136 Church St., 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10007, www.gammonrecords.com

Last In Line — S/T, 7"

Last In Line play stop-on-a-dime hardcore with a speedy punk-rock influence on this lil' slab of wax. Gravelly, shouted vocals with dark and sometimes violent lyrics remind you these guys are pissed. (KM) Gloom Records, PO Box 14253, Albany, NY, 12212, www.gloomrecords.com

♫ Legendary Shack-Shakers, The — Cockadoodledon't, CD

Hearing this record feels like sitting in a sunset-dimmed Southern cafe, your sun-faded pickup and dog waiting outside in the dusty parking lot. Barely a year old, the Nashville four-piece takes a honky-tonk, boogie-down sound and makes it work. There's a little bit of bluegrass, a hefty portion of blues, and enough rock 'n' roll attitude to feel fresh. The banjo pluckin', yodelin', dirty fiddlin', harmonica blowin' Shack-Shakers live up to their name—I dare you to hear these songs and not tap your feet. "Help Me From My Brain" is a barn-burner of a ditty, with the perfect balance of solid instrumental structure and wild vocal yelping. When singer J.D. Walker promises that he'll be a-cloggin' until the day he dies, by god, you believe him. The only nitpick: "Blood On The Bluegrass" treads into rockabilly, and though it's done well, the electric guitars feel obtrusive compared to the old-timey feel of most other songs. The Southern Gothic element is strong, with that sneaky ol' devil popping up here and there. It's a reminder that in our increasingly homogenized megaculture, subcultures of all kinds find a way to thrive (in snazzy packaging, no less). (AT) Bloodshot Records, 3039 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60618, www.bloodshotrecords.com

Lenore Syndrome — Your Lips Taste Like Microchips, CDEP

The punks in *Bladerunner* have a soundtrack. Menacingly dark, yet accessible, punk laced with discordant keyboards—much like The VSS. Celebrating the futuristic post-electronic age with an ominous presence of gloom, they probably wear a lot of black and cut down life-giving trees in their spare time. (VC) What Else Records, PO Box 1211, Columbus, IN 47202, www.whatelserecords.com

Lickgoldensky - The Beautiful Sounds of... , CD
Metallic, frenetic hardcore like Mom used to make—that is if Mom ripped her vocal cords apart to make a marvelously pained scream. The guitars build nicely upon each other, the percussion is tight, and the end result is nuanced and varied. (AT)
Escape Artist, PO Box 472, Dowingtown, PA 19335, www.escapeartistrecords.com

☞ **LoPresti, Danielle — Dear Mr. Penis Head, CD**
For someone with so much rage against the music industry, Danielle Lopresti (or maybe her people) has done her best to keep me hip to her accomplishments. Before I can get to the CD, I must peel past the neon-sticker-infested jewel case to the accompanying bio sheet. From there, I'm hit with a rapid-fire assault of praise from major-label record producers and Ms. Ani DiFranco herself reminding me that I'm holding "the album of the new millennium" in my very hands. So, of course, I couldn't wait to hear the musical innovations that were sure to lift me from my present state and into musical nirvana. I rushed to my CD player, clenched my headphones firmly to my ears and was treated to the sounds of...Ani DiFranco. This blend of folksy femme rap over cheesy porn bass and acoustic guitars is almost guaranteed to offend anyone thumbing through these pages. It's a good thing Danielle LoPresti has this hype machine working for her, because this corny aggro-folk can't stand on its own. (PS)

Los Olvidados / Cliftons, The — Skate Rock Fight, 7"
As advertised, two skate-punk bands battle it out on this nice red vinyl. Los Olvidados are a younger, fresher U.S. Bombs and really impressed me with their cuts, while The Cliftons' two unreleased tracks will have all punk 'n' roll fans soiling themselves in delight. Best split this year. (BN)
SuperSpeedway, 304 S. Third St., San Jose, CA 95112, www.supersm.com

Mad At The Sun — Hot Snow Falling, CD
In the late 1980s, Mad At The Sun introduced the sound of American hardcore and post-punk (Hüsker Dü and all of Ian MacKaye's bands are unmistakable influences) to the kids in Essex, UK. Their songs are decent tributes to their DC heroes, making this CD a nice slice of history. (JD)

Reviewer Spotlight: Krystle Miller (KM)

HELIUM, *The Dirt Of Luck*. Since I began listening to Helium, I've felt that Mary Timony was one of the most underappreciated musicians of the '90s. The band's first LP, *The Dirt Of Luck* is often my soundtrack of choice when driving aimlessly about town. Picking up where their debut EP, *Pirate Prude*, left off, *Dirt Of Luck* only touches upon the medieval-influenced sound that now dominates much of Timony's music. *The Dirt Of Luck* is a perfect mix between the band's old "drunk pop" sound and the new, medieval Helium. The lyrics on this LP, as with all of Mary's lyrics, are total Catholic-girl-gone-bad style (the lyrics of "Flower Of The Apocalypse" are pulled straight from "Agnus Dei" of Catholic Mass), and they're full of more sarcasm and cynicism than you can shake a stick at. But the musicianship really makes this release stand out. Slow-paced pop tunes coupled with creative riffing and the occasional use of less conventional instruments (xylophone, synthesizer) somehow come off sounding like drunken, musical epic tales of good vs. evil. There are some great hooks on this release, and it's ever so fun to sing along with Mary's dead-pan vocals. I'll tell you what I tell my friends: If you see this release in the new or used bin, definitely pick it up for some classic indie rock, Matador-style.

Cop these records right quick: Cursive, *The Ugly Organ*; Saetia, *A Retrospective*; Party of Helicopters, *The First Two Years Of Conquering The Tundra*; Between The Buried And Me, *S/T*; Red Stars Theory, *But Sleep Came Slowly...*

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, United Kingdom, www.bosstuneage.com

Mad Caddies — Just One More, CD
If you don't already know, these guys are a retarded ska-punk band that continues to pervert the two styles. To make things better/worse, they added elements of a Dixieland jazz to apply the salt to this already open wound. You know what? The kids love this shit. (DM)
Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119, www.fatwreck.com

Makara — Discography, CD
Waiter, I'll have a plate of buzzing static, a double order of the guy who lives in the apartment above me jumping up and down and hammering shit to his walls, a side of tortured wailing by dying animals, and a small salad sprinkled with breaking glass. Yum. (DAL)
Carmen Diablo, www.carmendiablo.cjb.net

Malade De Souci - MMMM-bbaa, CD
Why do people record this sort of self-indulgent, unlistenable pap? I suffered through 92 (yes, you read that right) abstract songs of frenetic guitar riffs, clunky drums, and the occasional banshee yell. Avoid the same fate at all costs. Remarkably terrible. (AT)
No Sides, PO Box 257491, Chicago IL, www.nosides.com

Mara'akate - S/T, 12"
With a song called "Wolfenstein 3D," it's not surprising that this record provides noisy, spazzy and out-there power hardcore. It's clever without being pretentious, and it's worth turning up to 11. (AT)
Alone Records, PO Box 3019, Oswego, NY 13126, www.alonerecords.com

McColley, Rob — A Boy Named Laurie, CD
Radio-friendly pop with cloying "I'm cute but I'm profound" lyrics like, "life's too short for slow modems/ in fact life's too short for any of its treasures at all." If that kind of thing appeals to you, hey, for the time being at least, it's a free country. (DAL)
Legal Records, www.parasol.com

Megaxbrand — Halogen, CD
If the Magnetic Fields mistakenly took LSD instead of Prozac, they might turn out something like this. Psychedelic, light jam music with a sloppy smattering of noise and extended noodling breaks, and an authoritative, syrupy deep-voiced singer. (DAL)
Self-released, www.megaxbrand.com

Midnight Creeps — Doomed From The Get Go, CD

You know its going to be rough going when the record's first track is a tribute to G.G. Allin. Screamy and sexy female vocals with heavy rock 'n' roll licks and sticks. Midnight Creeps singer Jenny Hurricane knows how to make the girls cry and the boys swoon. Good stuff. (JG)
Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

Misery Signals — Debut EP, CDEP
Tough chug-chug metallic hardcore overflowing with blastbeats and intricate guitar work, mixed with slowed-down, painfully depressed melodic grooves. I think I'm going to start using the term "post-Unbroken" to describe these sorts of bands. (MG)
State of the Art Recordings, PO Box 11876, Milwaukee, WI 53211, www.stateofheartrecordings.com

Model Citizen — The Inner Fool, CDEP
Birmingham, Ala.'s Model Citizen blend straight-forward rock 'n' roll with a smidge of punk, creating a sound that I liked well enough on this release. Solid production and tight arrangements help their melodies percolate under the singer's relatively distinctive voice. I bet they put on a good show. (JD)
Self-released, 652 Idlewild Cir. Apt. J, Birmingham, AL 35202, www.model-citizen.net

Moral Crux — Pop Culture Assassins, CD
Political pop-punk from Washington state, but sounds like it's from the East Bay. Tight musicianship and some nice vocals make this a sure-fire pleaser for fans of the genre. (KM)
Panic Button, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94712, www.panicbuttonrecords.com

Morticia's Lovers — Rock 'n' Roll Overdose, CD
Quick, hip-shakin' garage rock from Italy takes a nod toward bands like the Vibrators and the Stitches, but with a '50s rock 'n' roll aesthetic. Really quite good, but their self-described "pure sexual porn rock n'roll" tag (whatever that means) is annoying to me. What happened to plain old rock 'n' roll? (MG)
Zaxxon Virile Action, 45-A Adelaide, Sore-Tracy, QC, J3P 1W3, Canada, www.zaxxonvirileaction.com

**Municipal Waste / Bad Acid Trip — split, 7"**

Municipal Waste thrash their way through several tunes based on Kurt Russell movies, oddly skipping his Disney era completely. *Bad Acid Trip* do the dual-vocalist thrash thing with some definitely odd vocal parts. Unfortunately neither add anything to an extremely tired genre. (AS)

Amendment Records, 580 Nansemond Cres., Portsmouth, VA 23707

My So Called Band — Always Something There To Destroy Me, CD

Pop punk with smart lyrics. The songs vary from track to track, some totally rockin', and some aren't so good. Their style reminds me of a lot of old West Coast clean-sung punk, before it was cooler to not sing. This is a pretty fun record. I hope these guys get out of NC and make it west sometime soon. (TK)

Suicide Watch Records, PO Box 9599, Charlotte, NC 28299,

¶ Nastasia, Nina — Run To Ruin, CD

On Nina Nastasia's third punk-infused Gothic Americana album, *Run to Ruin* (released by her famous label, Touch and Go), her chilling, precocious child-woman voice again seems to rise out of swirling darkness with spooky, mesmeric beauty. Blood-rousing quiet-to-loud dynamics and strings-driven builds achieve rich symphonic cacophony — a counterpoint to otherwise quietly uncluttered arrangements. Psych-rock sounds and a gypsy spirit occasionally echo through shimmering electric guitar and what sounds like a bouzouki. Dirty Three drummer Jim White provides the down-tempo backbone; his "signature" is immanently felt. Recorded in a 300-year-old farmhouse in Noyante la Gravoyere, France by Nastasia's biggest fan, Steve Albini, *Ruin's* eight whispery songs are barely more than an EP. Nevertheless, the album has already made my 2003 top ten list. Love this! (JS)

Touch and Go, P.O. Box 25520 Chicago IL 60625

New Brutalism — A Record Of American Fury, LP

Imagine indie rock getting mad and unleashing some rage, and you get these 10 songs. Similar to Shellac—unsurprising, as Steve Albini has recorded for New Brutalism—but with its own roughed-up style. (AT)

Code of Ethics, 10101 N. Orange Ranch Rd. Tucson, AZ 85742

New Grenada — The Open Heart, CD

This CD reminds me of high school, getting pissed off at everyone, listening to local punk-rock bands and getting sneered at by jock-types in the hallways. *The Open Heart* pounds with swaggering guitar and enthusiastic drumming. The vocals grate with agony, and the lyrics swerve with cool-teen wisdom. (SP)

Plumline Records, PO Box 213, Marysville, MI 48040

¶ New Pornographers, The — Electric Version, CD

Vancouver supergroup The New Pornographers are like a super-literate Archies, updated with post-modern themes and richer arrangements. They're even more fun and just as catchy. There's a "Sugar, Sugar"/"Bang Shang-a-Lang" quality reminiscent in the Pornographers' "ooh ooh oohs" and "do do dos." But while *Electric Version's* pop underground sound has bubblegum stylings, it's not vacuous. Uptempo, with pretty harmonies, jangly guitars, swirling keyboards and titles like "Miss Teenage Wordpower," it's hyper-kinetic fun with solid indie cred. Recalling the lovely Veronica, appealing country/pop switch-hitter Neko Case sings crisply in the upper registers. Freckled and redheaded, Carl Newman (Zumpano) is Archie's doppelganger with a voice made for pop. Heaviness is confined to lyrics, as in "Chump Change," where Daniel Bejar (Destroyer) sings, enigmatically as ever, about fame and self-abuse. A seven-piece with two songwriters (Newman and Bejar) and three lead singers, the Pornographers' upbeat, cooperative vibe results in 13 smart-pop hits on *Electric Version*, which rates even better than their 2000 smash debut, *Mass Romantic*. (JS)

Matador Records, 625 Broadway, New York, NY 10012, www.matadorrecords.com

Next Best Thing — Those That Time Takes, CD

Continuing in the spirit of Grade, NBT bring it with the sensitive-metal thing. Rocking punk/metal licks with the sung/screamed vocals over a pounding rhythm section. This is tougher than most with somewhat poor recording quality, but this is a good one if you dig the style. (DM)

Amendment Records, 580 Nansemond Crest, Portsmouth, VA 23707, www.angelfire.com/punk/amendment

Nineteen Forty-Five — I Saw A Bright Light, CD

If most mainstream alternative bands sounded this honest and stripped down, then I would listen to the radio. Think about early '80s college rock and

how the songs didn't seem to be created in a boardroom. Nineteen Forty-Five have a simple quality highlighted by the mixing of Dave Barbe. (EA)

Daemon Records, PO Box 1207, Decatur, GA 30031, www.daemonrecords.com

Northern Liberties — Erode + Disappear, CD

A wild three piece led by a fuzz bass, Northern Liberties follows the hallowed footsteps of Baltimore's Lungfish. Lyrical meanderings about the human existence and the confinement of definition set to monotonous tones—if it sounds pretentious, that's because it probably is. Props for the Harry Smith cover art, though.

World Eater Records, 4506 Locust St., Philadelphia, PA 19139, www.world eaterrecords.com

¶ October Allied — S/T, CD

Dang, just when you thought Tom Waits singing "Jesus Gonna Be Here" was the epitome of gravel-voiced crooning, October Allied's lead vocalist, Scott Quay, comes along and rips through your boom-box with a voice that would make Louis Armstrong weep. While quite irritating at first, Quay's odd rasp grew on me like a damn strong piece of ivy around a flailing tree. The lyrics aren't half as bad, either. The band sings about everything from the difficulties of manhood to life during wartime with a certain cognizance that only makes the tunes easier to admire. In the album's opening track, "Innocent," Quay moans, "When did I get greedy/ When did I grow old/ When did I lose my soul?" And in the timely "Specialized Times," he wails, "Democracy is treason/ in wartime." Should this album be just another mindless mix of songs about sex and drugs, October Allied's eccentric and testosterone-pumped style might be its downfall. But, luckily, this band is smarter than your average bear. (SP)

Self-released, www.octoberallied.com

One Step Shift — Chemical Burn, 7"

Two-song 7" from this dreamy trio from Oakland, Calif. Interesting psychedelic guitar work that, along with the music, gets to be slow but then kicks right back into some rock before you lose your attention. I wish other bands of this sort would learn to do that. (BC)

Loderbrock Records, PO Box 25453, Salt Lake City, UT 84125-0453, www.loderbrock.com

Reviewer Spotlight: (Mr) Dana Morse (DM)

FELA KUTI AND THE AFRICA 70, *Expensive Shit*. I know this space is saved for a classic "punk" review, however this may suffice. Fela Kuti provided his listeners with intense Afro jazz that was incredibly rhythmic and in your face. At this time in Europe and the States, jazz and rock fusion was beginning to happen, and Fela took his influences from this era back to Africa to a slight degree and combined them with the flowing sounds of various horns, guitars and percussion. The end result was amazing. Lyrically, the Africa 70 had quite the strong political message against the police state in Nigeria and its quality life. *Expensive Shit* is a story of how Fela beat a drug charged when a joint was planted on him by the police, and he ate it. He was held until he passed the joint, but with help of his cellmates, he was able to dispose of it at night and then provided a clean sample to the authorities. The B-side, "Water Get No Enemy," is interpreted as the lack of attention and "flow" from the government to its people. The story of Fela is an amazing one that is worth the price of admission alone. But this chapter is pretty fucking punk in my eyes.

Records of the moment: Retisonic EP; Q And Not U, *No Kill*; Solea, *Even Stranger*; new Blood Brothers; Sole, *Selling Live Water*; and Kid Koala, *Nufonia Must Fall* (book & CD).

Opeth – S/T, 7"

Opeth play two acoustic tracks that sound like an even more depressing, creepy Elliott Smith. The artwork and picture included look like they belong in a black metal album. There is a genuinely eerie feeling that goes along with this whole package, and it's making me pretty uncomfortable. (TK)
Robotic Empire, PO Box 4211, Richmond, VA 23220, www.roboticempire.com

Organ Donor – Midwest/Italia, CD

Sullen, acoustic ballads from Des Moines singer-songwriter Jeremy Grace. It's a little bit country and a little bit Radiohead. I dig it, but living in Des Moines for three months left me an incurable Iowaphile. Includes a deliciously slow and mumbly cover of "I Know It's Over" by the Smiths. (DAL)
Bi-Fi Records, PO Box 1327, Ames, IA 50014

Origami – Please Exit Quietly, CD

Australian rockers Origami ripped several pages out of Sleater-Kinney's playbook, but they shine brightest when they play against type. The shimmering instrumental "Gtr-Gtr" and the down tempo "Berlin" are dreamy pop landscapes that meld chiming guitars with hazy vocals, trumpets or time changes. Hopefully they'll continue to refine their sound. (JD)
555 Records, 4465 Spring Meadow Cir., Flagstaff, AZ 86004, www.rawbw.com/~aelison/555

Otherwise – Dark Adapted Eye, CD

Why do so many bands sound like this? Otherwise doesn't sound bad; they even sound kind of good. But even if this is U.K. emo, it sounds like East Coast U.S. emo to me. Same kind of introspective, jangly guitar, mathy signature changes with prominent drums and emotive lyrics. (JS)
Firefly Recordings, P.O. Box 30179, London, E17 5FE, www.fireflyrecordings.com

Owl & The Pussycat – S/T, CD

Named after Edward Lear's charming children's poem, Owl & The Pussycat offer their own sweet tales of innocence and heartache on their debut album. Owl, better known as Lois Maffeo, and Pussycat, or if you prefer Greg Moore, have created delicious harmonies to match their sparse, polite pop. Recommended. (JD)
Kill Rock Stars, PMB #418, 120 State Ave. NE, Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Bart Niedzialkowski (BN)

SWINGIN' UTTERS, *The Streets Of San Francisco*. When *The Streets Of San Francisco* hit the streets, and I bought it on a whim I didn't know what I was getting myself into. I bought the record because Rancid's Lars Frederiksen produced it, simple as that. Yet when the first unforgettable riff of "Storybook Disease" hit, I knew I had acquired a new addition. My love for street punk rock started inadvertently when I heard "Teenage Genocide," "No Eager Men," "Just Like Them" and "Mr. Believer." In fact, the record rarely left my CD player the first few months of my proud ownership. It's one of the records that truly influenced me to partake in the punk-rock scene on any level I could. It's a record I still listen to very often, absorbing the twangy guitars, the sing-along choruses and the unity so central to street punk. I still smile when Darius Koski pulls out the accordion on "Beached Sailor," "Teenage Genocide" and "Catastrophe" and reminds me just how much depth there really is to a good punk sound. Most importantly, with each subsequent listen, my vigor and loyalty for the music I've come to depend on is renewed and my love for it rejuvenated.

'03 Florida Drive Heaviest Rotation: Swingin' Utters, *Dead Flowers, Bottles, Bluegrass And Bones*; Emiliana Torriani, *Love In The Time Of Science*; Brand New, *Your Favorite Weapon*; U.S. Bombs, *Covert Action*; Turbonegro, *Ass Cobra*.

Pacific Ocean, The – So Beautiful And Cheap And Warm, CD

Ed Baluyat is one of the three brothers who formed Versus. Hard to beat, Versus is his most interesting band, but The Pacific Ocean's sound is a good one: contemplative, mystical slo-core, driven by soft guitar picking and Connie Lovatt's wispy, feminine lead vocals, with nice touches of weeping cello. With contributions from The Silver Jews' David Berman, Versus' Fontaine Toups and Magnetic Fields' Claudia Gonson, this is one well-connected indie band. "In The Gold" is an especially pretty and interesting song, with a gorgeous chorus interspersed with Lovatt's spoken musings. Some of the songs could use editing to hone and sharpen the album's focus. (JS)
Teenbeat, P.O. Box 3265, Arlington, VA 22203, www.teenbeat.net

Panic In Detroit – S/T, CDEP

Upbeat, melodic rock that I'm sure the local "modern rock" station would play in a heartbeat. The singer has a great voice, and the band is good at what they do, but I just wasn't feeling the "alternative rock" thing they had going on. Surprisingly, J. Robbins produced this one. (KR)
Silverthree, PO Box 3621, Fairfax, VA 22038, www.silverthree.com

Paper Doll – Sink Or Swim, CDEP

Paper Doll's lead singer, Kaytee O'Neill, sounds like a younger version of Madder Rose's Mary Lorson. The songs vary from ballad-like to fast-paced pop with thin female vocals and predominantly rapid drumming. Loaded with teenage appeal, this EP is perfect for listening by the river, getting sloshed and making out. (SP)
Rosewater Records, PO Box 30, Riverdale, MD, 20738, www.rosewaterrecords.com

Party Of Helicopters — Please Believe It, CD

Noodley, poppish, punkish rock that takes a page from the Book of Treepeople. The mostly sung, high-register vocals are really up front in the mix, but they don't really match the music's frenetic energy. The overall sonic package sounds oddly incohesive, but it could be the mix. (KR)
Velocette Records, 83 Walton St., Atlanta, GA 30303

Pelican – Untitled, CDEP

Here are four long, sludgy, repetitive, hypnotic and vocal-less songs that actually sound better the louder you play them. Those with short attention spans need not attempt to listen. This is a musical journey intended for the extremely stoned. (TK)
Hydra Head Records, PO Box 990248, Boston, MA 02199, www.hydrahead.com

Petrograd – Nineoneone, CD

What a production! Luxembourg punks Petrograd have outdone themselves with this release. Their lyrics are some of the most thoughtful political and personal ones I have heard, with the topics all revolving around, as the title indicates, September 11th. This release includes a 64-page booklet filled with writings of Noam Chomsky written in multiple languages, as well as their lyrics, which are also written in multiple languages. The music is interesting, because it isn't easily definable in the traditional sense. It is poppy, but more creative than traditional pop-punk. The song that stuck out the most for me is "July 20th," which is about Carlo Giuliani, the protester who was shot and run over multiple times in Genoa, Italy two years ago. This is an all around excellent listen, for those who enjoy a bit of intelligence with their punk. (TK)
Noiseworks Records, PO Box 310, 09028 Chemnitz, Germany, www.noiseworks.net

Pilot Light, The – Go Boom, CDEP

Pop-punk via J Church and done extremely well. The Pilot Light is catchy, melodic, singing-along-at-the-top-of-your-lungs-while-driving music. OK? OK! (AA)
Self-released, www.thepilotlightmusic.com

Pilot Scott Tracy – Flight 0713, CD

A new-wave classic in the making, ex-Causey Way Scott and Tracy take to the air with creating a danceable soundtrack layered in guitar/organ/synth-rock ecstasy. This is infectious as all hell, so get your dancing shoes on and come fly with me. (DM)
What Else? Records, PO Box 1211 Columbus, IN 47202, www.whatselserrecords.com

Pine, The — S/T, CD

Speedy post-punk with the nasally vocals buried in the mix. They're so dry and so low they add virtually nothing. The music's not bad, but the recording is muddy, and the combination of elements makes this record feel really long. (KR)
Alone PO Box 3019, Oswego, NY 13126



Pine, The – Lead Blocks For Feet, 12"

For a second I thought I was listening to Billy Corgan's new band, because at times the vocals brought to mind that darn pumpkin-smasher. Then I realized that if that was indeed true, his face would be plastered all over the sleeve, and this record is not nearly as pretentious or self-important as that. What it is, though, is raw indie rock with really loud guitars, distorted just enough to keep the sound abrasive around the edges. The sound is very intense, with the sparse vocals creating an almost haunted effect. Rich in sound and delivery, the LP benefits from honest songwriting and sincere passion. *Lead Blocks For Feet* captures the sound, the emotion and the creed of intense indie rock, something so many emo and indie bands fail to do. (BN)

Owsia Records, PO Box 4834, Richmond, VA 23220, www.gridsector.com/owsia.html; Alone Records, PO Box 3019, Oswego, NY 13126, www.alonerecords.com

Plan Of Attack – S/T, 7"

This band is all about hard-core male vocals, driven bass, and roller-coaster (i.e., so fast they're nauseous) beats. The lyrics are universal enough to relate to (hating one's town, manipulative friends and the deadening lifestyle of the worker's rat-race), and the recording is pretty good. A teenage-hard-core-freak's wet dream. (SP)
Self-released, www.planofattackhkc.com

Planet For Texas, A – Sprechen Sie Rock?, CD

Strong mixture of snotty pop-punk, southern rock and street punk that manages to entertain over the duration of the album. Thrashing guitars, blazing drums and bass and a great sense of melody with clever lyrics that bring it all together. (BN)
Diaphragm Records, PO Box 10388, Columbus, OH 43201 www.cringe.com/diaphragm

Plastic Bird – Swim, CD

Ten catchy, hook laden, '60s-esque, bubbly pop songs. Cute and sugary, yet fairly generic. (MG)
Cedeno Records, www.plasticbird.com

Plate-O-Shrimp – The Brunch Of The Living Dead, CD

Horrible band name, even though I assume it's taken from *Repo Man*. The 12 originals and one

Sweet cover remind me of a poor man's Figgs. Really well-crafted pop songs and a clean recording make this a nice self-released record. (EA)
John Ensley, 3627 Lyndale Ave South #2, Minneapolis, MN 55409, shrimprock@hotmail.com

Joseph Plunet And The Weight - Seven Stories, CDEP

Bittersweet and sometimes melancholy, these stripped-down, countrified ditties speak to the broken heart we've all known. A whiskey-soaked cover of the Smiths' "There Is A Light That Never Goes Out" seems disjointed; flawless viola is gorgeous, but Plunet's snarling rasp doesn't quite match. Overall, though, worth hearing. (AT)
TGVM, 1757 Ware Ave., East Point, GA 30344, www.thegreatvitaminstory.com

Poseur Bill – Chainsaw Dance Party EP, CDEP

Despite the name, this band is pretty ass kickin'. Mix the rawness of garage rock with the chaos of My War-era Black Flag. Impressively enough, this is a three-piece. These guys sound so thick, like the aural equivalent of molasses, with guitar licks almost as tasty! Poseur Bill features plenty of frenzied Greg Ginn-like guitar meandering, rumbling bass and pounding drum beats—and I'm a sucker for that chunky bass sound. The singer howls with a cocky swagger, throwing in some "yeahs" and "uh huhs" like he was making you punch yourself with your own hand. With only six songs, this goes by way too fast. Their insert says that this was recorded in '91, and there's no contact info, but this is worth searching out. I hope these guys are still at it. Judging by the cover art, they might have decapitated each other by now though. (NS)
Bum Leg Records, www.bumlegrecords.com

Pressure – Anthem, CD

Politically/socially charged melodic hardcore along the lines of Strike Anywhere with a twist. The twist is the punk 'n' roll tenacity on display in every song and the sense of one within the band. Everything is perfectly in tune, and even with the breakneck pace and group choruses come off perfectly. (BN)
Uprising Records, PO Box 42259, Philadelphia, PA 19104, www.uprisingrecords.com

Project Bottlecap – Days And Seconds, CD

Here we have some emotional pop-rock that recalls an early incarnation of the Get Up Kids. This is actually pretty good, but it lacks originality. (KM)
8816 Country Walk Dr., Indianapolis, IN 46227

Project Rocket – New Year Revolution, CD

This is a side project of Spitalfield's (Victory Records) lead singer. Wow, most bands would kill to have this sound as their main project, as this is pop-punk perfection. The vocals sound Superchunk-ish at times, and the 11 song glide with soaring guitar work from track to track. Great stuff! (BC)
Uprising Records, PO Box 42259, Philadelphia, PA 19104, www.uprisingrecords.com

Prurient – The History Of Aids, CD

The most grating piece of harshness I've ever heard! Throbbing noise covered by the distorted readings of Rumi. Songs only separated by what seems to be tape splices. This is like a garage version of *Metal Machine Music* and makes Sonic Youth sound like pansies. (AS)
Armageddon Label, P.O. Box 56, Providence, RI 02901, www.hospitalproductions.com

Punchline – The Rewind EP, CDEP

For those who threw out there Get Up Kids LPs in a fit of mod-rock rage but secretly wish they had 'em back, Punchline delivers all the boy-on-boy harmony and melodic breakdowns your little cryin' heart can handle. Drink it up, sucker. (JG)
Fueled by Ramen, PO Box 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604, www.fueledbyramen.com

Racebannon / Song of Zarathustra – split, CD

Racebannon turn in two droning noise tracks that sound the same in regular speed and fast-forward, plus a couple of spastic rockers that sound like Eric Gaffney of Sebadoh dosed up on meth. Song of Zarathustra comes out with guitars blaring, clanging the emergencycore alarm bells with convincing intensity. (DAL)
Backroad Records, 20260 Fieldstone Crossing, Goshen, IN, 46528, www.backroadrecords.com

Reaching Forward – Complete Discography 1998-2000, CD

Set aside for a moment the pretension of issuing a "complete discography" that spans three years. Or, well, don't, and prepare yourself for humorless hardcore with a straight face to match the straight edge. Without pushing any boundaries, these guys do tear it up, though, especially their thunderclapping drummer. (DAL)
Martyr Records, PO Box 955, Harriman, NY 10926-0955, www.martyrrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Sonia Pereira (SP)

THE REPLACEMENTS, *Tim*. When I was in high school, around 14 or so, I was the biggest 'Mats geek in the galaxy. It's quite embarrassing to think about but hey, I can't live in fear of the "cool" people forever. At this point in my life I'm not that big of a 'Mats fan at all. Blame it on growing up or the unfortunate succession of terribly trite albums that Westerberg insists on ruining my nostalgia with. But while I've sold all of my 'Mats CDs to some used record place, I just can't bring myself to part with the starry-eyed *Tim*. Not only does this album pull at my adolescent heartstrings, but it's loaded with great stuff even a 'Mats-hater could love. There's the goofy "Hold My Life," the almost ridiculous "Kiss Me On The Bus" and a slew of tear-jerkers, including "Swinging Party" and "Here Comes A Regular." And let's not forget the wondrous "Left Of The Dial," featuring the yummy presence of Big Star's ingenious Alex Chilton. While the album *does* harbor some god-awful tunes ("Waitress In The Sky," "Dose Of Thunder"), I just tend to blame Bob Stinson's drunken role in the band and kind of cancel it out that way. After all, shoddy excuses are worth fabricating when defending a record this worthy of serious play. And oh yeah, how could I forget their seminal classic, "Bastards Of Young"? Did that song validate my existence as a teenage fly on the wall for naught? I think not. Here I am, giving a bow, thanking the band that got me through some years of fresh hell, even if they did kinda suck in the end.

J'adore: Creatures, Boomerang; Bebel Gilberto, *Tanto Tempo*; Dame Fate, *Time And Tide Wait For No Man*; Juliana Hatfield, *Hey Babe*; any comic by Ariel Schrag (especially *Potential*).

Reagan National Crash Diet – Sucktastic, 2x7"

Packaging of the Year Award goes to these Chicago natives' double 7". Joining the likes of No Empathy and The Jesus Lizard and other great Chicago bands. RNCD has one song per side, and they give you a close look at the range of this co-ed, quirky-sounding punk band. (BC)
Rooster Cow Records, PO Box 578174, Chicago, IL 60657, www.roostercow.com

Red Card – S/T, CD

Trio from Bosnia-Herzegovina by way of Brooklyn. The vocalist's nasally hint of an accent and tendency to speak/sing remind me of The Fall, in a soothing sort of way, like a humble yet suave shortwave radio narrator is our chaperone as punk-noise mayhem rampages all around us. Red Card skillfully weave between tension-building plateaus and climactic ebullitions. It's dark and dense, and it's a record that will probably take some time before it conquers a patch of your mental song bank, but there are definitely times when they abandon the complexity for a straightforward, satisfying hook. It's that much more of a tension release because of all the meaty build-up. (DAL)
Useless Chords Records, 206 Scholes St. #16, Brooklyn, NY 11206

Revenge Therapy – S/T, CDEP

This is some well-played hardcore in the same vein as American Nightmare, but with more mosh parts. Although the sound is a little tired, these guys are definitely good at what they do, and this is worth seeking out. (KM)
Amendment Records, 580 Nansemond Cres., Portsmouth, VA 23717,
www.angelfire.com/punk/amendment

Rock Kills Kid – S/T, CD

By my second listen of this record, I was trying to sing along and was pretending that when they sang "please, girl" they were singing to me. This is pop punk at its finest, inspiring bouts of uncontrollable air guitar playing in anyone lucky enough to hear this release. (JD)
Fearless Records, 13772 Goldenwest St. #545, Westminster, CA 92683, www.fearlessrecords.com

Rocket Summer, The – Calendar Days, CD

Had Matthew Sweet's song been any, uh, sweeter, his name would probably be Bryce Avary. Bryce, known as The Rocket Summer, takes flight with

Calendar Days a captivating work of music that brings to mind the aforementioned Matthew Sweet, AM/FM, All-American Rejects and the Lyndsay Diaries. Upon a closer look, however, it's clear that Avary's songs are homages to greatest pop band of all-time, The Beatles. The beat, the song structures and even some of the lyrics can all be attributed to Bryce spending countless hours holed up in his bedroom listening to the masters of pop. Infectious at every turn, the melodies are laced with sugary pop interludes, courtesy of a multitude of instruments all played by Bryce, which again hints at Avary's biggest influence. What makes the record in the end is Bryce's ability to conform his vocals to every song. He's unafraid to explore the reaches of his voice, which gives it a slightly raw sound and instills the gorgeously layered melodies with the final perfect touch. Immaculate in every sense, *Calendar Days* is the result of Avary's love for music, and that love makes the Rocket Summer so damn endearing. (BN)
The Militia Group, 7923 Warner Ave., Suite K, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, www.themilitiagroup.com

Rocket West – How To Find Your Direction Without A Compass, CDEP

Take a few forlorn boys, combine them with some self-imposed melancholy, then grind them through a hit machine, and you've got this four-song guilty pleasure. Well-executed emo pop for all the 16-year-old girls to add to their mediocre collections. (AA)
Self-released, 1 Canner St., New Haven, CT 06511, www.rocketwest.com

Romance Morgue, The – The Demo Days, CDEP

Five tracks in the chaotic hardcore/screamo vein. Reminds me of a less spazzed and sassed version of the Blood Brothers or a mellowed-out Botch. Spooky samples and a spattering of yummy chugging metal licks slightly propel the band out of "been there, done that" territory. (MG)
Alone Records, POB 3019, Oswego, NY 13126, www.alonerecords.com

Romeo's Dead – It's All Your Fault, CD

Mall-punk fashion mixed with a fondness for late '80s Sunset Strip glam rock and catchy hooks, Romeo's Dead is a cheap thrill. Inhabited by the

ghosts of Skid Row and Faster Pussycat, *It's All Your Fault* is actually a tight record, despite all of its rock trappings. (GBS)
FastLane Records, www.fastlanerecords.com

Roosevelt Roosevelt – A Wish To Be Blind, CD

For about 20 seconds, I thought maybe this was going to be like the brilliant funkadelic dalliances of Gray Matter, but then I realized I was just being optimistic because of a few bass slaps and the presence of an old-school DC producer. No, it sounds more like Dave Matthews. (DAL)
Self-released, 5047 N. 36th St, Arlington, VA 22207

Rufio – EP, CDEP

I've wondered why there's been so much hype surrounding this average band. Their latest recording does nothing to change my mind. Here, Rufio sound like an edgier version of the Ataris, but lack the strong lead vocalist and really lag behind in the lyric department. It's all been done before. (BN)
Nitro Records, 7071 Warner Ave. F MPB 736, Huntington Beach, CA 92647,
www.nitrorecords.com

Sahara Hotnights – Jennie Bomb, CD

Wow. Sahara Hotnights hold onto the strings of my heart with the same panache with which they flick the strings of their guitars. Their sound is like a cross between The Runaways, The Donnas and International Noise Conspiracy, which makes them a very interesting band indeed. The songs, though somewhat formulaic rock, are punchy as anything that The Ramones ever put out, and their lyrics embody the girlish essence of Joan Jett-inspired spunk. Most of the tracks scream of leathery toughness such as when the lead vocalist, Maria Andersson, yells, "You're no big deal/ Out of style and out of class/ Know what I mean/ Your name will never last" in the mean-spirited "No Big Deal." And in the pep-squad anthem "We're Not Going Down," these ladies make it clear that they're here to stay as they arrogantly scream "We've made up our minds and we're back on the scene/ No use for bad advice 'cause we know what we need." Whew! I hope so, 'cuz I don't know about Jennie, but this band is certainly ready to explode. (SP)
Jetset Records, 67 Vestry St., New York, NY, 10013, www.jetsetrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Kyle Ryan (KR)

Ten Songs That Made Me Punk Rock, Part II or "Guess who came of age in the early '90s?" 6) "Unity," Operation Ivy. They should just hand out *Energy* to kids as they attend their first punk-rock show. The Op Ivy song, it was another song that acted as soundtrack to my early punk days. I never followed through on getting my "Op Ivy guy" tattoo, though. 7) (tie) "Underground" and "Speed," Samiam. No one pulled off the dramatic, intense, dueling-guitar build-ups like Samiam, as the intros of both of these songs show. Their melodic style has been emulated thousands of times over. 8) "New Book," J Church. I hadn't heard much J Church when I saw them for the first time in 1992, but this song stuck with me long after that show. I bought *Quetzalcoatli* later and have bought every one of J Church's records since. Awesome, catchy pop punk with great lyrics. 9) "Seed Toss," Superchunk. I remember hearing this for the first time in my friend's car, and Superchunk have had their hooks in me ever since. Even though they could play some of the catchiest power-pop you've ever heard, they were also able to slow it down and explore music more than most punk bands. 10) "Kerosene," Big Black. Ominous, grating, brutal, the chugging bass line, Albini's deadpan delivery—"Kerosene" is, in my opinion, the Big Black song. It made me look deeper into the possibilities punk offered.

Just something to do: Miracle of 86, *Every Famous Last Word*; Flyswatter, *Repeat In Pattern*; Horace Pinker, *Red-Eyed Regular*; Lynyrd's Innards, *Untitled No. 3*; The White Stripes, *Elephant*.

**Sandman – The Long Ride Home, CD**

Chris Sand is our troubadour for the 21st century. Influenced by hip-hop, country and folk artists (like Woody Guthrie), Sand lays down a simple—yet not at all simplistic—musical base for his ruminations on love, community, and Martin Luther King ("Folk Legend MLK"). Entertaining and engaging—I loved this. (JD)
Kmw-Yr-Own, 1717 Commercial Ave., Anacortes, WA 98221, www.kmw-yr-own.com

Sawtooth Grin, The – CuddleMonster, CD

Shrieking, spastic hardcore with touches of grind. The vocals are pretty much a constant screech. The guitars show some signs of melody, but they're mostly interested in bludgeoning your eardrums. The drummer has the precision of a jazz musician and the speed of Dave Lombardo. Very interesting, talented and headache-inducing. (NS)
Dead By 1918, www.annihilus.org/deadby1918/main

Scaredycat / Apathetic Youth – This Is LA, Not The South Bay, split 7"

Scaredycat offer crusty thrashpunk tunes and Apathetic Youth play speedy, mosh-pit inducing hardcore. (MG)
No Label Records, PO Box 1946, Venice, CA 90291

Seville — Take Me Home, CD

It's hard not to rip farts in the direction of a band with heavy ties to Dashboard Confessional, so let the songs be judged. Sappy Beatlesque (well, McCartney) melodies populate a keenly emo record, though the lack of whining normally perpetuated by this genre is absent from these self-effacing tear jerkers. (VC)
Purple Skunk Records, www.purpleskunkrecords.com

Sharp Teeth – Curse Of Convenience, CD

Something about the name of this band and the simple design of the CD led to believe that I'd like them. And I was right. This is a very talented five-piece. If Drive Like Jehu, old Fugazi or Sparkmarker float your boat, then all hands on deck, matey! Explosive rock held together by strong melodies and played at a head-bobbing pace. The two guitarists sound like they're jousting with the necks of their guitars. The singer has a great drawl without getting too screamy. And the rock-steady drums and deep bass keep everything from getting out of control. Sharp Teeth is one of those bands that makes full use out of every member so that

everything comes together as one cohesive force. Really, this is the type of band that I rarely hear and rarely hear do so well. Nicely done. (NS)
Self-released / soul(sic) records, www.sharpteeth.ca

Shotstar – What The Hell Is Rock And Roll?, CD

Very catchy pop-rock songs from these stylish boys. This is a little on the radio-friendly side, but is still worthy of some toe-tapping. The CD layout is total "sassy boy" style and has silhouettes of the band members with their hands on their hips. (KM)
Downfall Records, 1764 Bowling Green Dr., Lake Forest, IL 60045, www.downfallrec.com

Shovelflight – AKA Sink The Fucker, CD

Amazing limited packaging: a Fuck lunch bag and bow. The booklet is full of cool pics and social issues from gentrification to rape to suicide. This politico dirt punk band is gritty and straightforward with mellow interludes. Proceeds benefit Food Not Bombs, Prison Books, Earth First and a show space, among others. (DM)
Running Dog Capitalist Records, PO Box 18753 Asheville, NC 28814

Sidestar – You're Killing Me, CD

I had high hopes for this record, but, sadly, I was left wanting. It features a fairly straightforward take on melodic hardcore, a la Smacking Isaiah, and although its good, it fails to distinguish itself from the pile of similar-sounding records. Perhaps an infusion of emotion and passion could help. (BN)
Three Mileage Records, 381 Broadway, Fourth Floor, Suite 3, New York, NY 10013

Silent Kids – Tomorrow Waits, CD

If I didn't know any better, I'd think this band was on Elephant Six Records. The songs here are '60s-influenced pop jams with keyboards and weird samples. Although this suffers from bad production, it still makes me want to prance about town and blow bubbles at squares. (KM)
Two Sheds Music, PO Box 5455, Atlanta, GA 31107, www.twoshedsmusic.com

Since By Man – We Sing The Body Electric, CD

More of that polished, chaotic core that makes you do the palsy wrist-dance thing. Mix the music of Botch with the attitude of the Blood Brothers. Sometimes they change things up with mellower, experimental moments, but for the most part, this is chunky metal filtered through hardcore. Quirky, heavy and clever, just not my style. (NS)

Revelation, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232 www.revelationrecords.com

Six-Minute Heart Stop, The – 321Odds, CD

An interesting post-hardcore sound that's hardly original, but still catches your attention. The music drifts between Modest Mouse's hushed melodies and At The Drive In's frantic staccato movements, but the instrumental segues are annoying signs of dead-end ideas. (GBS)
Rise Records, PO Box 135, Roseburg, OR 97470, www.riserecords.com

Sixsouth – A Hole Where The Heart Once Beat, CD

Combining everything good about Avail and Strike Anywhere, Sixsouth pumps out 10 incredible tracks of raw guitar and vocal harmonies in melodic, head-bobbing anthems you won't be able to put down. (TK)
Scooch Pooch Records, 5850 W. Third St., Suite 209, Los Angeles, CA 90036, www.scoochpooch.com

Slum City – Hot Beef Rejection

Once you get past the unappealing cover art featuring your perverted Uncle Jack stuffing a mustard-and-ketchup-doused foot-long into his face, you've got a record of that's a bit reminiscent of L7 with Suzy Slum at the helm. It's draggily melodic with an early '90s generic punk sound. (AA)
Super Secret Records, PO Box 1585, Austin, TX 78767, www.supersecretrecords.com

Smog – Supper, CD

Bill Callahan recently explained to me that *Supper* is "about dawn to dusk," whereas *Rain On Lens* (2001) was a "black and white thing." The key to the new album is its sequencing. A narrative journey begins with the self-absorption of youth, with its "wild love" and sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. In the hard-driving "Ambition," the protagonist (antagonist?) is a sexual aggressor, climbing into a woman's bedroom uninvited. "Vessel In Vain" is a turning point; the antihero looks into the chasm and takes stock. The sleazy connections he sang about in "Ambition" (where he asks the woman, "Say, are you still tight with that pharmacist?") are replaced with a spiritual awakening when he sings two striking lines: "My ideals have got me on the run/ Toward my connection with everyone." A metaphorical photo shows him seated at a mirrored table, perched as if about to snort a line. Glittering specks scatter the surface of his reflection, like

Reviewer Spotlight: George B. Sanchez (GBS)

BILLY BRAGG, *Talking With The Taxman About Poetry*. "The difficult third album" reads the blue type at the bottom of Bragg's 1986 release. Shaking off the entrapments of pop-music lore and his own modern troubadour image, Bragg proves he could walk the fine line between lover and astute political observer, and he proves he could make engaging music for more than the targeted demographic. He also showed that collaborations could build upon his sound, a lesson perfected more than a decade later with Wilco in the *Mermaid Avenue* sessions. Solidifying his ability to sing from views outside his own, the growth of Bragg's dynamic and conflicted persona is revealed for the first time in his lyrics. The redux of "There Is A Power In The Union" as well as "Ideology" and "Levi Stubb's Tears" are expected, but it's Billy the goofy, over-anxious young lover that sets this record apart from his previous two efforts. His voice soars on "Shirley (Greetings To The New Brunette)," singing about ice cream and chocolate kisses. Adorably transparent in "The Warmest Room," Bragg pokes fun at his own personal longing in the folk-trad "Wishing The Days Away." He's still grappling with the state of the world, as with "Help Save The Youth Of America," which finds Bragg hollering, breathlessly, verse after verse in an indictment of Yankee culture more relevant now than ever before. *Talking With The Taxman About Poetry* is also the portrait of a man exploring love and its many turns. And what could be wrong with that? For pinche Luis y los otros.

Tambien en La Casa: Brain Failure: *Turn On The Distortion!*, Narco News School of Authentic Journalism, Swingin' Utters, *Dead Flowers, Bottles, Bluegrass, And Bones*.

white powder when someone's sneezed or a mirror that's been used (to snort coke) for days. Surprised by the image, you look again. It's *sunlight* bouncing from the window—a life-embracing photo and a clever joke! What wit. I heart (Smog). (JS)
 Drag City, P.O. Box 476867, Chicago, IL 60647,
www.dragcity.com

❖ Snowdonnas — Over Now, CD

Bad onesheet line of the issue: "the soundtrack of ... the rhythm of the human heart." Despite that melodrama, this shoegazing record is a breath of fresh air—lush, patient, catchy, energetic. The British influences run strong in these guys, and they're making me a fan. The atmospheric guitars, synth, heavily reverbed, distant vocals, the strong rhythm section—they will make you nostalgic for the days when Dave Kendall hosted *120 Minutes* and showed the video for Ride's "Vapour Trail." Those were good days, and this a good record. I feel like we don't get very many releases like this, and that's a shame. Most impressive. Fans of our generation's British invasion, take note: The Snowdonnas may be from Texas, but they're doing the limey style just right. Get this. (KR)

Ballyhoo Withdrawal records, PO Box 685257, Austin, TX 78768-5257, www.ballyhoowithdrawal.com

❖ Snuff — Disposable Income, CD

Finally, the domestic release of Snuff's newest album. Snuff is one of my favorite bands, but I have to be honest: Their last album, *Numb Nuts*, disappointed me. It was good, but not great. Maybe they had run out of ideas or awesome melodies. Well their new album proves me wrong. They've added a guitarist, done some experimenting and returned with one of their best albums. Snuff is essentially a melodic punk band, but they've done more with the genre than any other band. They've incorporated horns and keyboards but without any touches of annoying ska punk. They have fast, metallic guitars at times that are never overbearing. And they write the best melodies you've ever heard. On this album, they continue that tradition while adding some new elements like dub and electronica (just a tad—don't get scared) that never take away from their basic formula, which is writing great, diverse songs. Songs like "Angels 1-5," "To Disappoint" and "Salad" show that they're still the kings of tuneful punk rock. Get you some! (NS)
 Union Label Group, 78 Rachel St. East, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2W 1C6 www.unionlabel.com

Socials, The — Narrow Minded Entertainment

For A Close Minded America, CD

The Socials pair occasionally clever lyrics with hasty guitars to whip up a somewhat mindless concoction jam-packed with screamy meanderings and crazy drumming. While mostly adolescent in its reflections, the band's intentions are good. (Yes, even if the topless picture of their drummer in the publicity picture frightens me.) (SP)
 Stay Real Records, c/o The Neus Subjex, PO Box 18051, Fairfield, OH 45018

❖ Solea — Even Stranger, CDEP

If Garrett Klahn hopes Solea will bury the flash-in-the-pan embarrassment of his pseudo-Brit-pop outfit The New Rising Sons, let's give him that hope. That, and the fact that his new band won't be the disappointing blip on the radar his past efforts have shown. Teaming up with seasoned members from Samiam and Knapsack, Solea contains more sincerity than New Rising Sons and more maturity than the immensely popular, yet ultimately melodramatic Texas Is The Reason. It sounds like one would expect: a less punchy version of Samiam (or Knapsack, for that matter), but with solid rock songwriting. Adding Garrett's nasally, soaring vocals only brings up fond memories of driving to high school with *Do You Know Who You Are?* in my tape deck. Melodic hooks over lightly distorted, radio-friendly riffs will surely win crossover fans—if commercial success is something they're aiming for. I felt the same when I first heard Rival School's *United By Fate*: If you're looking for nonprovocative and easily accessible summer jams, this would be a good place to start, but don't expect more. This CDEP is an enhanced and comes with a pretty well done music video. (VC)

Three Mileage Records, 381 Broadway, Fourth floor, Suite 3, New York, NY 10013, www.3mileagerecords.com

❖ Soledad Brothers - Live, CD

There is a flood of stripped down, bluesy rock 'n' roll bands coming out these days, thanks to the success of The White Stripes. Many of these bands suck, totally suck, but the Soledad Brothers are a great dirty blues/rock 'n' roll band. The best part is that they are not a two-piece garage outfit. They manage a three piece with two guitars, and the occasional harmonica or sax gives the songs some flavor. Singer Johnny Walker reminds me a lot of another Detroit transplant Bantam Rooster. Detroit, Mich., has been turning out great bands in the past few years, and the Soledad Brothers should

be at the top of your list. Recorded live at the now-defunct Gold Dollar back in 2000, this was the Soledad Brothers' third release. (EA)
 Dim Mak, PO Box 348, Hollywood, CA 90078,
www.dimmak.com

Solo Project, The — Bend/Break, CD

Pretty good emo/hardcore along the lines of Texas Is The Reason. The singer has a good voice whether he's singing or occasionally yelling. Good guitars alternate between driving rhythms and more intricate parts. Very talented, but I think "good" is all that I can declare at this time. (NS)

Rise, PO Box 135, Roseburg, OR 97470 www.riserecords.com

Sorry About Dresden — Let It Rest, CD

I was always impressed by their name and remember seeing them at the Lizard & Snake years ago. They maintain that Chapel Hill sound by being quirkily playful, yet discordant, but have more rock in the indie rock. Smoother vocals and more straightforward songwriting add freshness to the sound. (VC)

Saddle Creek Records, PO Box 8554, Omaha, NE 68108-0554, www.saddle-creek.com

South Bay Bessie / The Hot Flashez - split, 7"

Both bands on this split 7" play bland alternative rock, which is a shame because both bands also display above-average musicianship. The Hot Flashez add a saxophone and a dash of new wave to their sound, but they're still insipid. (AE)
 Self-released, www.thf.rock.it,
www.geocities.com/southbaybessie

Southkill — S/T, CD

This guitar-and-drums duo produces massively thick-sounding instrumentals that are as good as any of those symphonies produced by avant composers like Glenn Branca. (AS)
 Noreaster Failed Industries, 6423 Richmond Hwy. #3204, Alexandria, VA 22306

Special Goodness, The — Land Air Sea, CD

Land Air Sea will undoubtedly give indie fans and music snobs a boner. High in culture capitol, this is a collaboration between Weezer's Pat Wilson and former Rocket From The Crypt drummer Atom Willard. The music strays little from Wilson's Weezer roots and is ultimately unexciting indie pop. (GBS)
 N.O.S. Recording, 7711 Wish Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91406

Reviewer Spotlight: Patrick Sayers (PS)

SQUEEZE, *Argbargy*. Having retired two portable CD players this year, I've been left with no choice but to break out my prehistoric Walkman to ease my morning commute. Having only held on to about a dozen cassettes from my youth, I've recently scoured every thrift store in my path to keep my headphones occupied. To my surprise, I'd come across a nearly complete Squeeze discography, and since then, *Argbargy* has yet to leave the deck. From the opening one-two punch of two of their most recognized jams ("Pulling Mussels From A Shell" and "Another Nail In My Heart"), Squeeze has got me actin' a fool strumming air guitar for all on public transportation to see. Thankfully, *Argbargy* proves a worthy investment past the radio staples with songs like "Misadventure" and "There At The Top" further proving that Squeeze are the kings of the good time. Simultaneously, they interweave eerie, synth-heavy creep outs like "Here Comes That Feeling" and "I Think I'm Go Go" to throw us all for a much-needed loop. Eventually, I'll make my way through the rest of the Squeeze catalog, but for now I'll run *Argbargy* until it's warped beyond recognition.

Things that make me go Hmm... Turbonegro (reissues and live), Panthers, *Lets Get Serious* and the new Party Of Helicopters.

**Spoiled Rotten – Guitarded, CD**

Rather bland, thinly recorded fourth generation Ramones funneled through the Queers and Mutant Pop records. If you need more of this, then more power to you. (EA)
Amp Records, 153 Ave. South, Hamilton, Ontario L8M 3B6, Canada, www.grayline.cjb.net

Stairwell – The Sounds Of Change, CD

The sound of change it's not, but catchy indie power pop it is. Sugary harmonies, midtempo beat, and muted guitar riffs—Stairwell is, in their words, searching for a place "where the harmonies can dance forever." Likely to be featured on the soundtrack of another coming-of-age teen flick. (GBS)
Hopeless Records, 16140 Leadwell St., Van Nuys, CA 91406, www.hopelessrecords.com

Starlings, TN – The Leaper's Fork, CD

An unexpected gem, Starlings, TN have taken cue from Wilco's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* and applied modern recording techniques to traditional folk music. At times incorporating a small choir, trap kit and stand-up bass, the Starlings, TN sound derives primarily from a string-based quartet that is at times evenly split between mandolins and dulcimers. More than 14 tunes recorded onto a four track and then mixed to DAT, the sound is much more vibrant and full than expected from a four-track recording, owed greatly to the use of delay and echo effects that give the sound a haunted quality that's similar to Sparklehorse. Senetobia Starling takes the lead vocals for most of the record and sings with a hushed charm that's not unlike Wilco's Jeff Tweedy, while the rest of this rag tag group chimes in on subtle originals like "That Girl Of Mine" and traditional numbers like "Whiskey Before Breakfast" and "Nothing But The Blood of Jesus." The cover of "Red Rocking Chair" has a creepy vibe that gets straight to the soul of the song. For fans of early Uncle Tupelo and Transcendental Blues-era Steve Earle, *The Leaper's Fork* is a solid recording worth an honest listen. (GBS)
Chicken Ranch Records, Post Office Box 340262, Austin, TX 78734, www.chickenranchrecords.com

Static Lullaby, A – And Don't Forget To Breathe, CD

Intense metalcore, equal parts screaming chug and gentle melody. Dark, poetic lyrics, emotive meanderings, crazy metallic breakdowns, and some of the most impressive cover art/graphics I've seen in a while. Well fit for fans of Shai Hulud, Poison the Well, etc. (MG)

Reviewer Spotlight: Neal Shah (NS)

76% UNCERTAIN, *Hunka Hunka Burning Log*. OK, so I actually like *Estimated Monkey Time* a little more, but *Hunka Hunka Burning Log* is almost as good, and it's the only album that I have here. You can't go wrong with 76% Uncertain. If you didn't know, 76% rose from CIA and later spawned Shelter and Reflex From Pain. But 76% Uncertain will always be the best in that lineage. These guys played powerful hardcore crossed with hard-rock sensibilities and a good ear for melody, especially on this album. They let up on the speed of their earlier material and added more power. Tuneful, tough-ass guitars fill this album—I believe they even had three guitarists at this point. But don't expect any prog rock. Just solid guitar work and some ripping solos. And Bones' (one of the best hardcore vocalists ever) vocals are in full fury here. I always thought he sounded like a slightly tougher Milo. This album has a couple of redone songs from *Monkey Time* and a better cover of "Live And Let Die" than Guns N Roses' orchestral pomposity! I would have loved to see one of 76% Uncertain's reunion shows with AOD. This album was originally released on Pat Dubar's ill-fated Wishingwell label, but the band is supposed to rerelease all of their old stuff soon. Hopefully this spotlight will give them a kick in the ass to hurry up.

You make my hear go pee: Ween, Poison Idea, Pavers, Inside Out, Pharcyde, Cro-Mags, Mario All Stars for Super Nintendo

Ferret Music Corp., 47 Wayne St. #3, Jersey City, NJ 07301, www.ferretstyle.com

S.T. Monroe – All I Really Want Is You, CDEP

Cute, geeky, college pop that sounds like it was written by a bunch of guys who spent way too much time listening to the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* and the sleeker, early Beatles. Good harmonies, though. If Cornershop ever caught your attention, you might wanna check out S.T. Monroe. (GBS)
Excursion Productions, 2807 St. James St., Rolling Meadows, IL 60008, www.excursionproductions.com

Sidekicks, The – This Is Euphoria, CD

A Northern California pop punk trio in the vein of One Time Angels and the Lonely Kings, The Sidekicks have a solid tone that probably induces singalongs drawing on the hole left in the hearts of Jawbreaker fans. (GBS)
Let's Go! Records, PO Box 156 Campbell, CA 95009, www.lets Gorerecords.com

Stick Figure Suicide – Mission, CD

Catchy, melodic hardcore with pop-punk influences that sounds like a cross between Against All Authority, minus the horns, and Union 13. Fast, aggressive and catchy, the majority of the songs clock in at well under three minutes, just like every record in this genre should. Worth a listen. (BN)
Break Even, PO Box 42469, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.breakeven.org

Straight Outta Junior High – Kiss of Deaf, CD

This is an amusing pop punk rock band that tends to play at lightning speeds, has catchy hooks, decent wit and song writing that falls somewhere in between Weezer, the Descendents and NOFX. This is top-shelf quality that needs some recognition. I'm usually the first to bash stuff like this, but it's really fucking good. I'm tired of the dumb lyric punk rock stuff, but these guys rely more on wit and presentation. Even when it is a tad ridiculous, these guys are so incredibly tight I end up smiling and start rocking to the beat. I'm even won over by the cover of "Total Eclipse of the Heart," a song I can't fucking stand. If I had a contact at Fat Wreck or some other label, I'd be telling them to go to Nebraska and check out SOJH! These guys can rock it. (DM)
Self-released, PO Box 84841 Lincoln, NE 68501, www.sojh.com

Straphanger – S/T, 7"

Grand Forks, N.D., indie rockers pressing two inspiring songs on white vinyl. They look to be local favorites, making music since '97. Their style is self-described as "Midwest Loud." I guess that depends on the volume of your stereo. Whatever it's called, it's good music. (TK)
Mental Telemetry Standards and Voids, PO Box 46643, Kansas City, MO 64188-6643, www.mentaltelemetry.com

Straphanger – The Grain Belt, CD

I had opinion about Straphanger midway through listening to this CD. (Most songs ranged from OK to moderately interesting.) However, the record ends with a cover of my least favorite song ever: "Damn, I Wish I Was Your Lover." Guys, guys, guys, that was too post-post-ironic, even for me. (JD)
Genuflect Records, 3702 Berkeley Dr., #1, Grand Forks, ND 58203

Striking Distance – The Bleeding Starts Here, CD

This is a collection of some crucial political hardcore from DC's Striking Distance. Seventeen songs in total, including the band's first 7", demos from their LP and a couple of cover songs (Minor Threat, Void) make up this release. The music is tight, straight-forward hardcore without any metal influence, unlike most hardcore bands these days. The lyrics are political, but not in a preachy type of way. Even though it may not be an original sound, this is an awesome hardcore record that's so good I missed my exit when I was driving. Nice release for fans and newbies alike. (KM)
Reflections Records, Spoorwegstraat 117, 6828 AP Arnhem, The Netherlands, www.reflectionsrecords.com

Strip Johnny - Signal To Noise Ratio, CD

This one-man show plays computerized zany comedy punk, with a bit of funk thrown into the mix. The lyrics would make the Dead Milkmen proud. Song titles include "Let's Fuck" and "Violent Corn." Much wittier than Atom And His Package, this is some funny shit that deserves notice. (AE)
Self-released, www.cdbaby.com/stripjohnny

Struction – S/T, CDEP

This is some original-sounding rock from a trio out of the East Coast. Interesting male/female vocals mixed with some strange guitar playing and an over-the-top sound. Some of the six tracks

sound like people are losing their minds. Interesting! (BC)
Self-released, struction@structionnoise.com

Suggestions, The - Mix Tape, CDEP

This very limp NY rock EP has expensive production values and is replete with commercial elements such as sparing but distinct doses of occasionally distorted vocals. Aggressive enough of the time to highlight the overall flaccidity of it all, this is a nauseatingly contrived EP. (AE)
Mr. Duck Records, PO Box 8961, Albany, NY 12208, www.thesuggestions.com

Sunday Driver — A Letter To Bryson City, CD

Ready-for-radio power pop like *Building-era* Sense Field. It's not objectionable; it's slickly recorded and catchy. But it's catchy in that radio way, where I feel distant from it, as if it's going for something I can't get with. Solid alternarock, the type you'd find on the soundtrack to *American Pie*. (KR)
Doghouse Records, PO Box 8946, Toledo, OH 43623, www.doghouserecords.com

Supersuckers — Motherfuckers Be Trippin', CD

Call 'em garage, call 'em cow punk or just plain rock 'n' roll, the Supersuckers are either too stubborn or too fucked up to call it quits, but they've always held a unique position among the realms of punk, rockabilly and country that few bands could straddle, much less pull off as confidently as these guys. Along with the Street Walkin' Cheetahs and the New Bomb Turks, the Supersuckers developed an unapologetically nonpolitical musical platform built on solid beats and Marshall stacks cranked to 10 that preceded the punk mainstream eruption of the early '90s. That being said, *Motherfuckers Be Trippin'* is as musically significant as the latest release from AC/DC and about as sonically varied. Continuing their devil-may-care rock 'n' roll journey down a familiar path of distortion, quick solos and sexual innuendo, Eddie Spaghetti and company have yet to deviate from their familiar sound. At this point, they show no likely signs of such. Like my neighbor's old Ford Pick up truck, I'm surprised the Supersuckers are still at it, but like the drunk sleeping head down on the bar at my neighborhood watering hole, I can't blame 'em. (GBS)
Mid-Fi Recordings, no contact information provided

Reviewer Spotlight: Jill Steinberger (JS)

V/A, *Hey Drag City*. Oh, joy of joys. Oh goodie. You know that warm, fuzzy feeling when you listen to musicians who almost feel like family, their music is that close to your heart? That's me when I'm listening to *Hey Drag City*, a rare 1994 sampler from arguably the most innovative (and, yes, attitude-challenged and baaad-ass) indie label, where my favorite musicians got their start years ago, before audiences knew how important and longstanding their contributions would become. Bonny Prince Billy just put out his bazillionth great album, *Master And Everyone* (reviewed below). Here he's with brothers Paul and Ned Oldham, doing one of their most gorgeous raggedy songs ever, "For The Mekons." It could make you cream, it's so lovely. Word is Will wrote it when he had a crush on the Mekons' Sally Timms. Brother Ned recently released an *awesome* folk-rock album (reviewed below) with his band The Anomoeanon (*Asleep Many Years In The Woods*). Smog just put out his greatest album ever, *Supper* (reviewed below); he's on the comp from before he was (Smog), singing a deliciously romantic, naughty song, "Your Face" ("More beautiful than the sun/ More beautiful than the rain/ More beautiful than all these things/ Was your face/ When you came"). There are great tracks from Royal Trux, Silver Jews, Gastr del Sol, Pavement, Red Red Meat (Califone) and more. Drag City, ya got taste! I get mad at you sometimes, but I love you lots. Sending my wettest kisses.

What's on my carousel? Three 2002 Bonnie Prince Billy Istanbul radio and concert bootlegs sent, with artist's permission; Nina Nastasia, *The Blackened Air*; Yo La Tengo, *Summer Sun*; Daniel Johnston, *Songs Of Pain 1980-83*; Larry McMurtry, *Saint Mary Of The Woods*; Stephen Malkmus And The Jicks, *Pig Lib*.

Supreme Dispassion — Yes Lord We Will Shit With You, CD

Songs like "I Gonna Watch The Smurfs," "Fat Baptist" and of course "Celebration Of The Miscarriage" will give you a good idea where this wacky punk band is coming from. Living in Alabama must do strange things to people. (BC)
Pinch & Roll Records, www.pinchandroll.com

Swingin' Utters — Dead Flowers, Bottles, Bluegrass And Bones, CD

The Utters are clearly one of the best punk bands going, as this latest LP reminds us. Chock full of hits, *Dead Flowers, Bottles, Bluegrass And Bones* is a collection of songs as diverse as the Utters sound. From the '77-style aggressive punk romps "Elation" and "No Pariah" to the Pogues-like "Don't Ask Why," all of their influences are present. Johnny Bonnell's voice is as powerful as ever, with his signature throatiness. Darius Koski again amazes with his guitar work, backing vocals and uncanny ability to make the accordion sound punk. I was a bit anxious about hearing the Utters without longtime guitarist Max Huber, who left the band, but his absence really spotlights Koski's amazing musical talents and allows Spike Slawson's bass guitar to play a central role in the tighter new sound. There is no doubt that the Swingin' Utters sound has matured since *The Streets Of San Francisco* won the hearts of punk rockers everywhere. Aging is not always a bad thing, and this latest record finds the boys all grown up and peaking as songwriters and musicians. *Dead Flowers, Bottles, Bluegrass And Bones* will go down as the best record the bunch recorded since the aforementioned classic. (BN)
Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119, www.fatwreck.com

Tall Dwarfs — The Sky Above The Mud Below, CD

New Zealand lo-fi acoustic duo that apparently has been around since the end of the '70s. Their sound is simple and appealing, like the Beatles meets the Mountain Goats, and they seem to have a lot of famous friends like Neutral Milk Hotel, the Verlaines and Jad Fair. (DAL)
Carrot Top Records, 935 W. Chestnut, Suite LL15, Chicago, IL 60622

Tarantulada! — S/T, 7"

Really quick rock 'n' roll a la Supersuckers or Zeke. The Pusshead-esque cover art is great. (GBS)
Get Some! Records, no contact information provided

Terre Thaemlitz — Lovebomb, CD

This experimental electro-acoustic concept album—an English-Japanese exploration of "love as an expression of culturally specific material social processes"—is interesting to hear as sound, as noise, as aural art. An accompanying 36-page booklet has thoughtful essays and explanation of Thaemlitz's theory. (AT)
Mille Plateaux, 4060 St. Laurent, Ste. 602B, Montreal, Quebec, H2W 1V9 Canada, www.mille-plateaux.net

Terror — Lowest Of The Low, CD

Ex-Buried Alive frontman and former Carry On members unite to unleash one of the most punishing, pure hardcore records in recent history. Rich dual guitars supply the melody just as the pounding drums abolish it. Above it all, Scott Vogels brutal screams broadcast the return of old-school hardcore. (BN)
Bridge Nine Records, PO Box 990052 Boston, MA 02199-0052, www.bridge9.com

They Fought Back — Resist, CDEP

They Fought Back's lead vocalist, Tree, sounds like a sexier version of that cool-as-hell rebel girl you had a crush on in the 10th grade. And no I'm not saying she's got a Kathleen Hanna-type whine either. Tree's got enough guts and clit behind her voice to make L7 and Public Enemy proud, not to mention that her bandmates do a kick-ass job surrounding her impressive growls with pointed basslines and understated drum beats. While many of the songs sound like angry renditions of something a punk Tool might conjure up, the lyrics are surprisingly poignant in their subtleties ("No your mama won't leave/ 'Cause she loves you" from "Your Momma"). Not only is They Fought Back a wicked cool name for a band, but God bless it, it's a wicked cool band too. Don't try to fight the power, you cannot resist *Resist*. (SP)
87 Records, 214 Ogden Avenue, Jersey City, NJ, 07307, www.87rx.com

Throwing Muses, The — Throwing Muses [2003], CD

Back with their first album of new songs since 1997, The Throwing Muses have not lost their intensely tonic-sonic touch. [2003] reminds me of playing *Hunkypapa* (1990) over and over in college or of a road trip I took out west, listening to "Dizzy"



until my boyfriend revolted. Kirsten Hersh's guitars and Bernard Georges' bass churn and grind out angular yet mellifluous noise. Hersh's vocal carries her own hook-laden melody-lines, deftly winding dark, enigmatic lyrics around drummer David Narcizo's rapidly changing time signatures. Hersh's half-sister Tanya Donnelly adds the girlie backing vocals that defined the band's bracing sound on classic albums like 1988's *House Tornado*. An "Original Muse," Donnelly left to form the Breeders in 1991 with Kim and Kelly Deal and then founded Belly. On the liner notes, she's amusingly credited as the "Prodigal Muse." As important as labelmates and contemporaries the Pixies, Providence, R.I.'s Muses were the first American group released on famous English label, 4AD. These 12 new moody yet exhilarating songs are wrapped in the finest cover art 4AD has yet issued — [2003] is a visual objet d'art. Also, Hersh has just released a new solo LP, *Grotto*, which will please fans of *Strange Angels* (1998). (JS)
4AD/Beggars Group, 625 Broadway, NYC, NY 10012, www.4ad.com

👉 **This Bright Apocalypse – Motion And Rest, CD**
There aren't just 10 ordinary songs contained on this fine disc; they are masterpieces of musical intellect and displays of sheer creative talent. TBA not only create genius songs with great style and complexity, but they layer them with flowing vocal harmonies. All of the songs have numerous rhythms kept by various percussion instruments that accent every part of the song, not trail off. The guitars are intricately played. TBA have been compared to Faraquet and Hero Of A Hundred Fights, which is an adequate comparison. If you are a fan of well-written, complex songs and musical precision, you will be kicking yourself for not listening to this kick-ass album. (TK)
54' 40" Or Fight, PO Box 1601, Acme, MI 49610, www.fiftyfourfortyortight.com

Thomas Köner – Zyklus, 2xCD
Zyklus is a double CD featuring extremely experimental soundscapes—and I mean *extreme*. There really aren't any beats or lyrics or melodies at all. Instead we have a man speaking in French, the sounds of crickets, storms, machinery and wind gusts. Not really "music," but avant-garde composition of sound. (SP)
Mille Plateaux Records, 4060 Boulevard St. Laurent, #602B, Montreal, QC, H2W 1Y9, Canada, www.force-inc.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Miss Annie Tomlin (AT)

THE UNDERTONES, *S/T*. Babyfaced, Irish and catchy as all get-out, The Undertones are criminally underlooked in the pantheon of late-'70s rock 'n' roll. Not exactly pop, but not exactly punk either, they blended a '60s mod sound with a Ramones-esque bounce. Their eponymous 1979 full-length is a terrific debut, especially considering the tender age of the musicians. Or maybe that's the point: This is a record that captures the alternating joy and angst of being a teenager. It's fun but not goofy, youthful but refined, simple yet smart. Singer Feargal Sharkey's unmistakable vibrato tenor shakes its way through songs about juvenile hijinks, love, loss and angst (John Peel has said that he can't listen to "Teenage Kicks" without getting misty-eyed). "Get Over You" is an ode to an irresistible punk girl (when Sharkey sings "I don't wanna get over you/ It doesn't matter what you do," you believe him.) Lest you believe the Undertones were obsessed with girls, they also explored the dark side of adolescence (most notably in "Jimmy Jimmy," the story of a boy's suicide). It's honestly difficult to find a flaw in this record. The band is still around in some incarnation, so have a look at theundertones.com—and maybe even join their Rocking Humdingers Club. Sounds like fun to me.

Lately I have been listening to The Only Ones, *Another Girl, Another Planet*; The Castaways, *Liar Liar*; and Adult., *Anxiety Always*, but mostly because my beau plays it in his car.

Ticker Tape Parade - You're Causing A Scene, CDEP

These well-conceived tear-jerking songs of distress would fit in perfectly on the soundtrack to a teen film, near the end just before the audience realizes the girl really will get asked to the prom. There's enough kick drum for two bands, giving this more drive than most alternapop. (AE)
Sunset Alliance Records, PO Box 32048, Mesa, AZ 85275, www.sunsetalliance.net

To Fester Within / Avram, The - split, CD

To Fester Within play some metal-influenced hardcore with interesting guitar lines, but it doesn't really stand out from the legions of other hardcore bands that rock this sound. The Avram's style is slightly more melodic, but again, it didn't really grab me. Not a bad release, but not outstanding either. (KM)
Kickbright Productions, 610 Brooks Rd, W Henrietta, NY 14586

Tommy And The Terrors – 13 The Hard Way, CD

Straightforward streetpunk—short and simple hard punkin' tunes with some rock 'n' roll leanings and lots of gang-vocal choruses. Alludes to circle pits, boot stomping and many pints of Guinness. (MG)
Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

Tone – Ambient Metals, CD

A rotating roster of DC punk all-stars have recorded instrumental soundscapes under this name for more than a decade. There has been overlap with bands like Government Issue and Smart Went Crazy, and the current line-up includes two drummers and four guitarists. Rich and focused, this is atmospheric and lucid. J. Robbins produced. (DAL)
Dischord/Brookland, 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington, DC 20007

Tossers, The – Purgatory, CD

It's kind of funny that there's a trend of Irish folk punk bands rising from the drunken Irish streets. However, The Tossers have been doing it for 10 years, and this is their fourth release. *Purgatory* is heavier on the folk and grit with that punk-rock attitude. (DM)
Thick Records, PO Box 220245, Chicago, IL 60622, www.thickrecords.com

👉 Trenchmouth – More Motion, CD

This is a "Best Of" album covering this unique Chicago band's career. This CD includes songs from their four albums and their 7" as well as a live

this bright apocalypse / turning blue

song and a few unreleased studio songs. Built on a punk foundation, they mixed the best of early-'90s Dischord with late-'70s art punk, like a DC dance party. I remember seeing them a couple times on pretty diverse bills where booty shaking was not out of place. Trenchmouth's guitars are winding at times and playful at others. The drums cover standard punk territory as well as Latin and dub styles. The bass is bouncy and full, and the vocals are strong and energizing. You can definitely hear their influence on bands like At The Drive-In or The Dismemberment Plan. So if you missed out on them the first time around or need a refresher, here's your chance. (NS)
Thick Records, PO Box 220245, Chicago, IL 60622, www.thickrecords.com

Trumans Water – The Singles 1992-1997, CD

1992-1993, pure trash noise. Around 1994, they kind of get their shit together with a noise-core thing like Drive Like Jehu had before reaching a more professional sound of shit (Trumans not Jehu). I have a new drink coaster. (DM)
No Sides Records, PO Box 257491 Chicago, IL 60625, www.nosides.com

Tub Ring – Fermi Paradox, CD

Super tight musicianship highlights the odd sounding, but inventive, songs on this album. Lots of quirkiness with the occasional hardcore style, this should please anyone who went ga ga over groups like Faith No More. (AS)
C&P Deezal Records, PO Box 16008, Chicago, IL 60616, www.undergroundinc.com

Turbonegro – Ass Cobra, CD

Just in time for the dirty rock revolution, Epitaph is rereleasing the back catalog of Turbonegro records. Plain and simple, if you're into such acts as The White Stripes, The Hives, The Vines and Electric Frankenstein, you need to own and worship everything Turbonegro has ever recorded. (BN)
Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

Turning Blue - ...Whatever 'Til We Die, CD

Turning Blue play generic pop-punk as well as anyone. As a high point, they deliver an above-average cover of the '80s Top 40 song "Break My Stride." The vocalist is distinct enough that they might have a shot at getting on a relatively big label some day. Best of luck. (AE)
Pal-Tone Records, PO Box 422, Milford, CT 06460, www.pal-tonerecords.com

Tyko - Transmissions From The Biosphere, CD

Should you enjoy music reminiscent of '80s Danceteria-type meditations, please pick up Tyko's new CD. The tunes are dreamy as marshmallow skies, and the vocalists echo the bubble-gum vibe perfectly. Kind of like math rock with an ethereal twist, *Transmissions* sounds exactly like its title: out of this world. (SP)

CD5, 1624 Alberta Dr, Little Rock, AR, 72227

Vermilion — Flattening Mountains And Creating Empires, CD

Four tracks: 10:44, 12:25, 7:12, 10:49. Looking at the cover and song lengths, you might think it's Yes. You wouldn't be far off, as Roger Dean did the artwork. Long, complicated songs that don't skimp on the rock or their demands of you. Jazzy, mathy, rockin'...and loooooonggg. (KR)

Redwood Records, PO Box 6041, Fullerton, CA 92834-6041, www.redwoodrecords.com

☎ Vexers, The — S/T, CD

Well-done and original female-fronted punk n'roll that does not lack a danceability factor. (That's a plus in my book.) Although the album definitely calls to mind some of the classic lady-led punk and new wave acts of the late 1970s and early '80s (X, Siouxsie, Blondie), The Vexers manage to work a lot of different styles and genres into their songs without sounding overdone and while remaining firmly rooted in a classic garage sound. For an example of how they blend genres to create their own style, check out the track "Fuck It Up," which begins as a bass-led minimalist dance-punk funky groove and then moves onto a great, dark-pop-rock chorus, and then back to the funky groove again. Definitely a kickass debut album, worthwhile to pick up if you're into anything from the Epoxies to Erase Errata. (MG)

Ace Fu Records, PO Box 552, New York, NY 10009, www.acefu.com

Vic Thrill — CE-5, CD

Talking Heads meets the Boredoms? Negativland with a dose of calypso? Tom Waits meets DJ Spooky? Have I mentioned yet that this record is strange and hard to classify? Every song is a new genre; in fact, every minute of every song is different. Some of it is really good, but it's a little much. (DAL)

Circus Clone Records, 185 South 4th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11211

Vincent, Sonny — The Good, The Bad, The Ugly, CD

Former guitarist of the Testors, Mr. Vincent acquires guitar talent from bands like the Damned, Stooges, Television, Black Flag, Bellrays, MC5 and the Heartbreakers, among others, to create a serious balls-out rock record with more solos than any punk record should have. But it keeps sounding good. (DM)

Acetate Records, 2020 Broadway, 2nd Floor, Santa Monica, CA 90404, www.acetate.com

Waiting For Autumn — Now I Know Forever, CD

Jesus-loving emo kids ponder love and God and life and God and personal breakdowns and...God.

Reruns: new reissues from punk's past.

ANTISEEN - Noise For The Sake Of Noise, CD

Way back in *Punk Planet* #41, this punk classic from 1989 was the subject of my reviewer spotlight. Now TKO presents the first-ever domestic release of ANTISEEN's best album. The CD version contains bonus songs, including covers of "Surfin' Bird" and "Cock On The Loose." Yes, you need this! (AE)

TKO Records, 3216 W. Cary St. #303, Richmond, VA 23221, www.tkorecords.com

Chance, James — Irresistible Impulse, CD

James Chance was a New York punk fixture who played saxophone for Lydia Lunch and before going solo to unleash "high IQ booty shaking" on the No Wave scene. Free-form funk with dashes of punk noise that still sound as sinister today as the day they were recorded. Great liner notes. (DAL)

Tiger Style Records, 401 Broadway, 26th Floor, NY, NY 10013, www.tigerstylerecords.com

JFA — We Know You Suck: Recordings 1981-1983, CD

The fourth installment from Alternative Tentacles Skate Punk reissue series, this manic collection of early recordings from Phoenix, Ariz.'s JFA stands on its own outside of the skate-punk genre. Grounded in early '80s hardcore while proficient in midtempo rock and melodic surf, JFA's sound is unique. (GBS)

Alternative Tentacles Records, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141, www.alternativetentacles.com

Savage Republic - Recordings From Live Performance: 1981-1983, CD

This is a reissue of pretentious experimental shit from the '80s. Borrowing heavily from Eastern rhythms, call it racist art rock if you like. Originally a 1992 double 10" vinyl release, the main advantage to the CD version is that it is easier to destroy and probably more environmentally friendly. (AE)

Independent Project Records, PO Box 20255, Sedona, AZ 86341-0255, ipr@sedona.net

*** Smoking Popes — The Party's Over, CD**

The late great Popes are as droopy and sappy as ever on this CD of covers, and I love it! They will always be one of my favorite rock bands, and I was lucky enough to be there for their first tour and when they signed to the big time with Capitol records. Now I get to review their final record put out on an indie label. This CD was recorded back in 1998, but is just being released now. The band does 10 covers of oldies from people like The Bryds, Willie Nelson, Judy Garland, Patsy Cline and others. Josh's lounge-singer voice is perfect for these types of songs. The band is tight, and the melodic guitar solos are pushed up in the mix the way they always did it. The Popes took a lot of shit for slowing down and then for signing to a major label. I think they now see the majors as a mistake, but a slower sound treated them just right. It gave the listener the chance to see that there was much more to this pop-punk band than first thought. I strongly suggest you also get their other studio records and 7 inches. (BC)

Double Zero Records, PO Box 7122, Algonquin, IL 60102, www.doublezerorecords.com

Stalag 13 — In Control, CD

Early '80s hardcore band, Stalag 13, reissue this no-frills hardcore record that tons of kids probably listened to while rolling around on their fishtail skateboards. Shouted, positive lyrics about remaining loyal to your friends and "staying in control" round this one off. (KM)

Dr. Strange Records, PO Box 1058, Alta Loma, CA 91701, www.drstrange.com

*** Turbonegro — Apocalypse Dudes, CD**

On a roadtrip to Atlanta on the cusp of the new millennium, my friend threw this record in the car stereo. "If you haven't heard Turbonegro yet, then you've got to hear this." For the next 47:22 minutes, this Norwegian band proceeded to rock me a new asshole. It was a triumphant soundtrack for the imminent Y2K apocalypse. Had the world ended after that, I would have been a happy punk rocker. Perhaps sparked by the recent surge of White Hives rock 'n' roll (and a new album), Epitaph has rereleased this classic to widespread distribution. Turbonegro dress in all denim. A member sports a sailor hat and gives free mustache rides. The singer ignites fireworks out of his ass. A central lyrical motif is homocentric sex ("Rendezvous With Anus" and "Good Head"), but the sexuality theme is considered a given—hey, it's rock 'n' roll, isn't it? If not, shut up and get fucked. Spanning an existence of over 10 years, *Apocalypse Dudes* culminates their evolved sound into an Alice Cooper-humps-AC/DC-and-then-sodomizes-The-Ramones mix. The gloomy, yet over-the-top '70s pop-metal is played with such searing fury that even guitarist Euroboy's ear-popping leads seem buried under a mass of sweat, cum, and denim. (VC)

Epitaph/Burning Heart, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

Xpopez — Democracy, 7"

Lo-fi thrash from the early '80s, reissued from an old tape compilation. Raw document of a hardcore Bay Area basement scene now long gone. (DAL)

PoNK-III Records, PO Box 4664, Walnut Creek, CA 94596, www.ponkIII.com



Christian alternative emo-rock ain't my thing. If it happens to be yours, check this out. (MG)
American Jealousy, 2796, Sycamore Drive, #202,
Simi Valley, CA 93065, www.americanjealousy.com

Watchers – To The Rooftops, CD

The Watchers are a funky band that captures the essence of *Remain In Light* era Talking Heads and sometimes, as on "The Dirty Sponsor," Gang Of Four. But without the lyrical bite and delivery of those bands, I have a sneaky feeling they just want to be a good-time funk band with some eclectic hooks. (AS)

Gern Blandsten Records, PO Box 356, River Edge,
NJ 07661, www.gernblandsten.com

Waterdown – The Files You Have On Me, CD

Incredible from beginning to end, Waterdown blends HC, metal and punk rock into a flowing killing machine so the kids can beat each other up in the pit. This is beautiful, with amazing guitar parts (similar to Snapcase), dual vocals (one smooth, one screamer) and a pounding rhythm section. Amazing! (DM)

Victory Records, 346 N. Justine St., Suite 504
Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

What The Kids Want - Inside Jokes Explained, 7"

What the Kids Want play lo-fi pop-punk with more energy than a Van de Graff generator. Their sound is very reminiscent of Operation: Cliff Clavin/Devil is Electric, with three main differences: First, there are no illiterate dogmat-

ic lyrics on this release; second, the female voice takes the lead with the male voice serving primarily as backup; and third, both vocalists sing almost in tune. The main singer, Ali, has a very nasal voice, which makes me think she's probably the same Ali that was in the Plan-It-X band The Sissies. All five of the songs on this record are remarkable, with bouncy rhythms and melodic niceties supporting surprisingly shrewd, personal lyrics. I especially love "Great Summer," a song about having fun while being an activist. I can't imagine they'd be anything but spectacular live, and they are a band that Bananas fans won't want to miss. The insert says they're looking for someone to put out a full-length for them, so hopefully they'll be around for a bit, as this is the best new 7" of lo-fi craziness I've heard in a long time. (AE)

Self-released, PO Box 954, Bloomington, IN 47402

Wheels – Year Of The Horse/Ten Bells, 7"

The materials with this London foursome's new 7" warn that Drive Like Jehu is a "lazy comparison," and sure, comparisons are innately lazy, but this one is so apt I have to parrot it. And hey, it's good company to be in. A solid debut. (DAL)
Firehands Records, 245 Ben Jonson House,
Barbican, London EC2, England

Where Eagles Dare – In A Thousand Words Or Less, CDEP

Pretty typical hardcore band with posi lyrics and gang vocals. Where Eagles Dare has a nice, driving

sound, but the singer's screechy voice slightly reminded me of the guy from Brother's Keeper, so I couldn't get into it. (KM)

Endwell Records, 19 Stori Rd, Newburgh, NY,
12550, www.endwelletc.com

Where Fear And Weapons Meet – Control, CD

If you like your hardcore with a heavy beat, then Where Fear And Weapons Meet is your ticket to paradise. This is definitely the case where a spectacular drummer make an average band into a kick-ass band. (EA)

Eulogy Records, www.eulogyrecords.com

Winter Blanket – Music For Ghosts, 7"

Somebody loves Fred Neil. Here are two songs by the '60s singer/songwriter and one song about his life. If you're like me and never heard of Fred Neil before, I assume he sounds a bit like lo-fi Nick Drake with male/female vocals. At least that is how I interpret this record. (TK)

Blood for Blood, 3314 Avenue of the Cities, Moline,
IL 61265

Wolf Eyes – Dead Hills, CD

Compilation of science-fiction noises looped and swirled and layered for your avant-garde enjoyment. For a similar effect you could put on your Starfleet uniform and listen to the needle skip at the end of a record. What's that, you don't own a Starfleet uniform? You loser! (DAL)

Troubleman Unlimited, 16 Willow Street, Bayonne,
NJ 07002, www.troublemanunlimited.com

Demo-lition Derby: cd-rs and demo tapes.

Brats, The — The Valley Of The Brats, CDR

OK-sounding pop punk with whiny vocals. If you like that sort of thing, "you can find them at any club where they have dollar draughts, or lots of sleazy gurls," says their website. (JG)

<http://committed.to/thebrats>

Brazen Hussies – Ya-Ba, CDR

Glam detritus. Halfway through they give up trying to sound like Bowie and seem to forget the record button is down as they noodle and blurt. (DAL)

Peanut Records, scrape100@hotmail.com, 42 Molton House, Charlotte Terrace, London N1 0JJ, UK

Bride Of Carnosaur – White Elephants..., CDR

Many genres, one band, all zany. Bride Of Carnosaur keeps listeners on their toes, because they never do the same thing twice, which just comes off as annoying. (TK)

www.20.brinkster.com/patd

City Of Liars – The Fall Of The..., CDR

Four songs of super-screamed hardcore up the grindcore alley, but still appealing to the screamo nation. (AS)

www.fordocumentationonly.com/Pages/cityofliars.htm

Dead End Kids – Bring Out Your Dead, CDR

Great CD title with 13 great, attitude-ridden tunes. This band sounds English or at least very '70s-punk influenced. It is refreshing to hear a band that sounds like this. (BC)

www.deadendkids.org

Dead Mission – Dang, CDR

Some spastic, thrashin' hardcore with songs called "People Who Should Die, Vol 1" and "Best Song Ever." This CD is fucking great. Get it today! (TK)
515 S. Thomas Ct., Fairfield, OH, 45014

Dick Panthers – Differently Abled, CDR

Musically, it's like upbeat garage rock with some keyboards, and vocally, it's weird. Sometimes the singer is distorted; sometimes they replace the vocals with goofy samples. One song sounds like the Angry Samoans, and another sounds like an old timey grandpa ditty. Very odd and enjoyable. (NS)

PO Box 419, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Freeman, Skidd — More Songs That I Recorded By Myself On A Cheap Four Track Analog Cassette Recorder In My Room CDR

Delta blues by way of Casio keyboards. Although a bit unnerving at times, this reissue includes the would be hit "Rock N' Roll Asshole." (PS)

PO Box 4281 East Lansing, MI 48826

Gods Among Men – Got Bricks?, CDR

Strange, pretentious lyrics with the subtlety of assless pants foisted upon the listener in a jarring amalgam of whispers, roars, and musical theater-style vocal posturings that come and go at random in a storm of masturbatory instrumental noodle-farts. (DAL)

Justin Straw, 4009 16th Ave. SW, Seattle, WA 98106

High Ceilings, The - The Edge Is As Safe As The Ground, CD

At their best, these Bostonites sound like they could open for Creed. At a prom. (AT)

www.thehighceilings.com

Human Adults, The – S/T, CDR

Xiu Xiu - A Promise, CD

Weird, creepy, orchestral, electronic-tinged and minimal. The songs are uniformly depressing (suicide? check. killing infants? you betcha), and the singer has one of those love-it-or-hate-it whispery voices. The whole thing feels like an avant-garde art opening with lots of disaffected hipsters pretending to "get it," when really they'd rather be playing Gamecube. (AT)

5RC/Kill Rock Stars, 120 NE State, #418, Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

Zeke - Live And Uncensored, CD

Zeke have been around for a decade now, and their brand of high-octane rock 'n' roll is now popular again, thanks to bands like the Hives. A little more metallic than say the New Bomb Turks, though they both shared the Epitaph label for awhile. Zeke's shows are filled with sideburns and gas-station-attendant jackets. You don't have to be ashamed for liking '70s metal and the New York Dolls—a different crowd indeed. This disc is released by members of the band and contains eight new tracks and more than 20 live tracks. The live material isn't the greatest sound quality, but captures the energy well. This is a good disc for established Zeke fans and those interested in seeing how a band sounds after that many years without hitting it big. (EA)

Dead Teenager Records, www.deadteenager.net

Zero Tolerance Task Force - Punk Rockery, CD

Who wants 28 tracks of '80s style Reagan punk? Think about the bands on early Touch And Go and

Dischord releases. ZTTF sound like many of those bands that you skip through when listening to those early compilations. (EA)

Self-released, www.zttf.com

Zincs, The - Forty Winks With The Zincs, CDEP

A slow and pleasantly dreary six-track EP featuring a baritone lead vocalist and timely guitars. The Zincs play music that is spare and stirringly moving—just the thing to play when you're down or needing some relaxing tunes to pacify yourself. (SP)

OhioGold Records, PO Box 25441, Chicago, IL, 60625-9998, www.ohiogirl.com

V/A - Chicken Head Records #2, CD

Thirty tracks of punk that is all over the place, but mostly lower quality. Fifteen different bands, a cheap-o sampler for those with small record collections. (EA)

Chicken Head Records, 7438 Etiwanda, Reseda, CA 91335, www.geocities.com/chickenheadrecords

V/A - Cle Punk Volume 1, CD

Wow, a lot has happened since I went through the shithole they call Cleveland. Great bands like Sidecar, Sounder, Hellvis and others are all on this—bands that should be playing the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame shows instead of the lame bands they get. (BC)

Smog Veil Records, #207, 316 California Ave., Reno, NV 89509, www.smogveil.com

V/A - Cool Grrrls Kick Ass, CD

This CD is a mix of both delightful songs and unmemorable tracks. Decent tunes include numbers by The Kowalskis and Dada Stunt Girl, but the cover art sucks. A model-type with a gun? How long is violence going to be entangled with female sexuality, even on a supposedly "feminist" album? (SP)

Coolgrrrls.com, PO Box 186, Balboa Island, CA, 92662, www.coolgrrrls.com

V/A - Drum Machine Madness, 7"

I take it that this is a compilation of grindcore bands experimenting with synths and drum machines, who either ending up sounding like the Locust or like they have an inhumanly fast drummer. One song each from: Agoraphobic Nosebleed, Wadge, Nemo, Alien Crucifixion and Pilgrim Fetus. (MG)

Robotic Empire, 12001 Aintree Lane, Reston, VA 20191, www.roboticempire.com

V/A - First Crush Compilation, CD

This is not a record for the recently heartbroken. Twenty-two emo and indie-rock hits all about girls and crappy relationships. Standout tracks include Jessica Six's "Vendors of Greater Things" and At The Drive In's "Initiation." (JG)

Thick as Thieves, PMB #252, 302 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.thickasthieves.com

V/A - The L.A. Shakedown, 2xCD

Two discs of some of today's best rockers: US Bombs, Nashville Pussy, Stitches, Makers, Dwarves, Lazy Cowgirls, Antiseen and 31 more. It is

Human break-neck speed hardcore with 75 percent of the tracks under two minutes. Really decent stuff for a demo. (EA)

Eat Me Records, 215 Townsend St., New Brunswick, NJ 08901, www.eatmerecords.cjb.net

Khantra - S/T, CDR

Experimental hardcore (and sometimes medium jazzy core) from Jersey that has a lot of interesting elements to it. If nine songs of weird stuff is your cup of tea, then drink this up, my friend. (BC)

Self-released, www.khantramusic.cjb.net

Life Is Bonkers - Full Moon Nation, CDR

Two guys and a keyboard produce surprisingly slick-sounding Casiocore that seems to go for They Might Be Giants rather than the more realistic basement dada of Ween. The result: has its moments, but mostly annoying. (DAL)

www.lifeisbonkers.com

Mr. Entertainment and the Latter Day Pookiemakers - Recreational Drug Usage And Cookie Consumption, CDR

Hilariously packaged CD-R of very fun pop with a ska influence comes in an old book with tabs made from pennies where lyrics are inserted. (AE)

mistere@bellsouth.net

Pack Of Vipers - S/T, CDR

Four screamo songs from this N.Y. band that sounds a little like Orchid with female vocals. Not very original, but definitely better than most. (TK)

680 Brooks Rd, W. Henrietta, NY 14586

Pizza Party / Rise And Shine - split, CDR

My favorite CD this issue. Rise And Shine speed through sloppy power pop, while

Pizza Party serves up a slice of novelty keyboard and gruff vocals. (PS)

Perplexagon Audio, 6605 Capitol Hill, Arlington TX 76017

Planet The, The - CDR

Quality new wavish prog rock with loads of tight playing. Could be the punk version of Yes! (AS)

PO Box 47214, Port, OR 97214, www.theplanetthe.com

Rise And Shine - Punkological Warfare, CDR

Goofy pop punk released monthly in subscription form. The lyrics provide a humorous social commentary. This is some catchy stuff. (TK)

Self-Released, 6605 Capitol Hill, Arlington, TX 76017, www.perplexagon.org

Secret Janet - S/T, CD

Loaded with fast-as-hell rhythms and punky lyrics like "I fuck you and I don't know why," Secret Janet's self-titled CD is sort like the type of record that you can play over and over without really figuring out if you like it or not. A monotonous and blurry experience. (SP)

secretjanetmusic@yahoo.com

Street-Dogs - S/T, CDR

This is '70s-style punk from Boston, and it is very good. Some of the songs, like "Star," even have a little of '80s pop feel to them. (BC)

www.streetdogsboston.com

Ugly Tree, The - Geographically Challenged, CDR

This is a demo of 16 heavy hardcore songs that mostly end in less than one and a half minutes. Cheap quality from cover to handwritten CD. (EA)

www.theuglytree.5u.com



crammed with mostly released songs and a few unreleased gems worth the purchase. Great sampler for those who are not initiated. (EA)
Acetate Records, 2020 Broadway, 2nd Floor, Santa Monica, CA 90404, www.acetate.com

V/A – Last Stop New Haven, CD

New Haven, Conn., compilation of seven bands ranging from rockabilly, punk rock, new-wave, garage, and '77-style punk rock. Each band has two to four songs, which makes this more interesting than a traditional compilation where each band only gets one song to represent themselves. (EA)
Monkey Power Records, PMB 113, 1440 Whalley Ave., New Haven, CT 06511, www.monkeypower-records.com

V/A – Mollies Mix, CD

Twenty-one songs, three good ones. With numerous terrible tracks (Gravy Train!!!!), this record plays like it's trying to convince *not* to buy any Kill Rock Stars releases. Despite their valiant efforts, Bangs, Sleater-Kinney and Tight Bro's can't save this thing. Bad electro-rock, bad rock, just lots of bad. (KR)
Kill Rock Stars, 120 NE State, #418, Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

V/A – No Escape, A Tribute To Journey, CD

Four fairly straightforward Journey covers: Ohms play "Anytime," Houston plays "Send Her My Love," Wafflehouse* does "Separate Ways," and Traindodge do "Only the Young." (DAL)
Urine Records, PO Box 413903, KCMO 64141, www.urine.com

☞ V/A – Not One Light Red: A Desert Extended, CD

So in preparation to listen to this, I made two columns in my notes: "good" and "bad." When it was said and done, four bands (out of 20) made it in the "good" column (Cursive, Bluetip, Mock Orange, Fivespeed—and you can find Cursive's song on *Burst And Bloom*). Notice the emptiness of the "good," while the other one is denser than Calcutta. I hate to emo bash, because I like emo, but *come on*. That's basically what I said during most of this record: "Oh please." The music goes from acoustic to Mineral-esque emo to powerpoppish stuff, but it's all emo, and it's all pretty bad. Many lyrics are so saccharine as to be almost offensive (The Real Diego, Kristofer Astrom & Hidden

Truck). I can empathize with your broken hearts, friends, but I'll be drinking my beer in the bar while you're playing. (KR)
Sunset Alliance, PO Box 32048, Mesa, AZ 85275, www.sunsetalliance.net

V/A – Oil, CD

The 19 tracks on Oil were recorded by Thick Records over 15 days inside an old oil-blending factory on Chicago's South Side. Standouts: The Owls, Tom Daily and The Reputation. While not every track shines, Oil manages to give listeners an eclectic cross-section of Chicago's music scene. (JG)
Thick Records, PO Box 220245, Chicago, IL 60622, www.thickrecords.com

☞ V/A – Point Break Volume 1, CD

The crossover compilation to end all crossover compilations (I hope). Most of the bands on this comp display some amazing talent. On the other hand, I feel I must say something. If you're going to write a Slayer-sounding song, don't get a singer who sounds like he belongs in N*Sync to sing the chorus about lost love. That type of crossover should never have been considered. Now that I have that off my chest, some of the notable tracks are from Converge, Ensign, Thrice and Skinlab. Other bands included are Shadows Fall, God Forbid, The Beautiful Mistake, Drowning Man, and Meshuggah. This record could have been so much better if the songs were picked because of their quality, and not their diversity. Even so, at \$6.98, it's cheap enough to pick it up without much of a loss. (TK)
Sidecho Records, 7923 Warner Ave. Suite K, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, www.sidecho.com

V/A — Shake Them Haters Off, CDR

A 12-song comp benefiting a new co-op show space in Milwaukee, the music runs from pop punk to screamo noise. For a cause like that, how can you not support 'em? (GBS)
(small) Noisemaker(s), 4023 N. Bartlett Ave., Shorewood, WI 53211, www.noise-maker.com

V/A – Smoking Popes Tribute, CD

The Smoking Popes were a decent band, but is this necessary? Thirteen-plus bands similar in style, yet lacking the Popes' distinct vocal touch. Well, except one band featuring said vocalist. Bad Astronaut and

Grade do the most interesting covers. Some other bands include Duvall, Tom Daily, Junction 18, Mike Felumlee and The Ataris. (NS)
Double Zero, PO Box 7122, Algonquin, IL 60102
www.doublezerorecords.com

V/A — Steve Caballero, Bandology Vol. 1, CD

This bizarre CD compilation features tracks from all the bands that skateboarding superstar Steve Caballero was in from 1982 to 1996, as if you care. Most of the bands—The Faction, Odd Man Out, Shovelhead and Soda—are mediocre at best. Recommended for hardcore Cab fans only. (JG)
Sessions Records, 60 Old El Pueblo Road, Scotts Valley, CA 95066, www.sessionsrecords.com

V/A – These Things Happen Vol.1, CD

This is a very nice, eclectic label sampler/compilation out of England. It features a smattering of young, most likely unknown to the rest of the world, pop punk, emo and hardcore bands. Featured bands include Travis Cut, Southpaw, Ann Arbor, Fire Apple Red and the Scaries. (MG)
Milleped Records, 1 Rose Rd, Southampton, S014 6TE, England, www.millepedrecords.cjb.net

V/A — A Town Full of Sinners, 7"

This compilation of quad cities singer-songwriters features the haunting and beautiful melodies of Chad Gooch, Stephanie Noble, Seth Knappen and Romantic and the Sirens. The songs on this record evoke the quiet, small-town feeling of aching and longing. A must-have for the secret romantic. (JG)
Blood on Blood Records, 3314 1/2 23rd Avenue, Moline, IL 61265, bloodonbloodproject@hotmail.com

V/A – Will Not Clear Man, CD

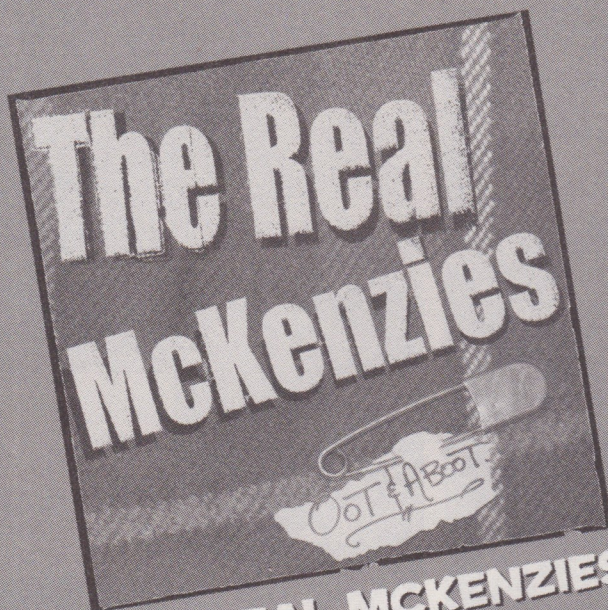
Will Not Clear Man is out of Elgin, Ill., and this features Seedy Sea Controversy, Burn Elgin, Over 7 Over and Meridians Divided. They have that Elgin sound where they cover a lot of ground, seem a little depressed and do that screamo thing. I miss those young, hot Elgin girls so much! (BC)
Will Not Clear Man, www.willnotclearman.com

Labels! Bands! We want to review your records ('cause lord knows, we're not getting enough already)! Send them to:

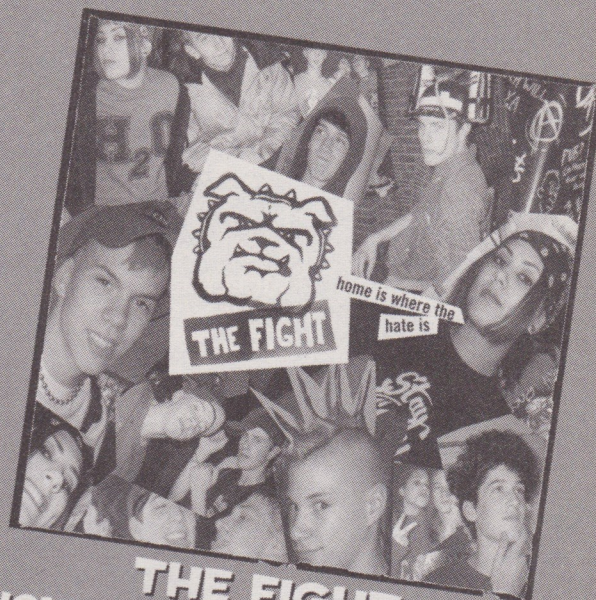
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4229 N. HONORE CHICAGO IL 60613

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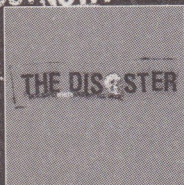


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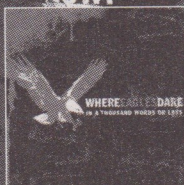
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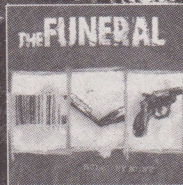


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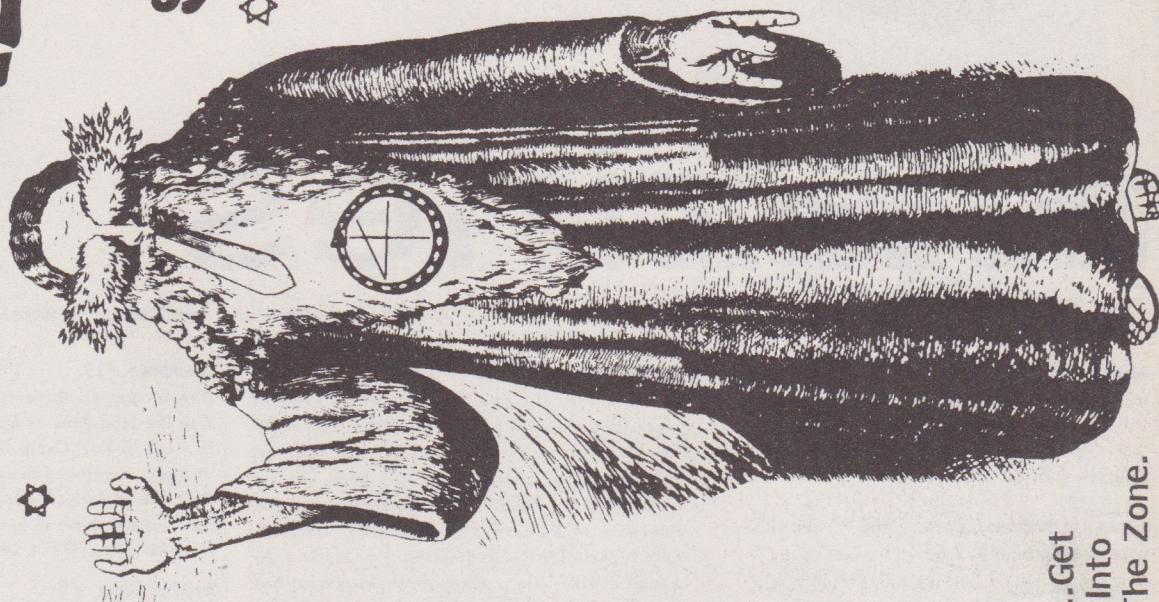


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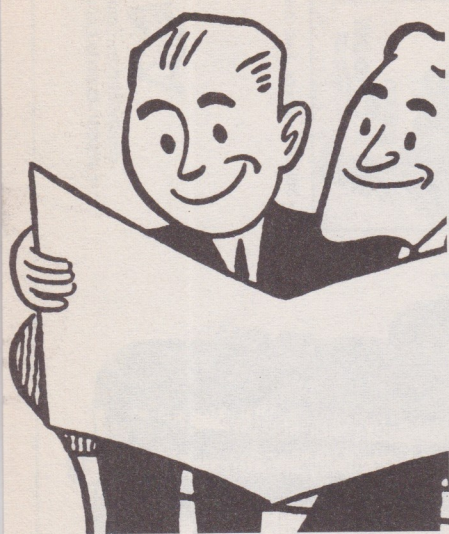
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zines

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Reviewers: Amy Adoyzie (AA), Joe Biel (JB), Vincent Chung (VC), Jen Dolan (JD), Dan Laidman (DAL), Patrick Sayers (PS), Claire Sewell (CS)

Abolitionist, The #1

A newsletter for the Anarchist Black Cross. Covers current legislation to give \$60 million to schools (via a group who builds prisons), a guide to Midwest political prisoners and how to write to them. (JB)

\$1, free to prisoners, Lawrence ABC PO Box 1483 Lawrence, KS 66044

Agricouture #3

Out of North Dakota comes *Agricouture*, bringing forward "music and culture on the prairie." This issue features a lengthy interview with Wayne Kramer focusing on politics in music, an introduction to black metal and a piece of short fiction. It all sits well between interesting media critiques and leftist politics. (PS)

1834 South 20th Street Suite 6, Grand Forks, ND 58201

☛ America? #10

Dude, anyone who has ever put out a zine knows that it is some labor-intensive, heart-wrenching work and not to be taken lightly. But Travis' brave soul tackled this deed in just one night, and it resulted in a short piece of zine literature that some people attempt to replicate but end up relying on clichés. Aside from the esoteric nature of a few pieces, many of the other essays read with a soothing ease of déjà vu, where you find yourself thinking, "Fuck, I've thought about this/felt this way, but I could never put it together in such a coherent and reasonable manner." In just 16 short pages, Travis offers us succinct insights on all those things you think about while daydreaming: loneliness and the "continual self-narrative" that comes along with it, how you can't possibly prepare yourself for the multiple times in your life where *everything* you touch turns to shit and the various mish mash of thoughts that inundate punk kids who feel like they're getting too old for all this noise, but can't stand to live without it. (AA)

\$1, PO Box 13077, Gainesville, FL 32604-1077

☛ Bitch Magazine #19

As a feminist, this has been one of my favorite magazines of recent years. This is the "Fame and Obscurity" issue, and they do a great job and considering and merging the two issues. On the obscurity side, disabilities on television and the new wave of housewifery are covered. Margaret Cho is part of the well-deserved fame section. As a huge fan of hers, I enjoyed the interview, but thought it should've been a bit longer. *Bitch* also weighs in on the Suicide Girls issue and presents, what I think, is the most well-balanced article of all the ones that have popped up in nearly every alternative publication recently. Always the magazine's best features, though, are its Love It/Shove It section and the columns. *Bitch* accepts submissions from anyone for consideration, and because of this there is always a good variety of representation for feminist and women's issues throughout every issue. I highly recommend this magazine for anyone remotely interested in either of those issues. Always informative and a great resource. (CS)

\$5, 1611 Telegraph Ave. Ste. 515, Oakland, CA 94612, www.bitchmagazine.com

Bloody Piss #1

Bloody Piss is right! A poorly bound zine filled with the usual uninformed political rants, unintelligible columns and short, predictable interviews with The Virus Roger Miret from Agnostic Front. Thankfully they've provided recipes for some alcoholic beverages, because after having read this zine, I need a drink. (PS)

bloodypiss@expn.com

Boyfunk, Volume 1

This is a resource for queer boys in opposition to the mainstream. I felt like a lot of it was vague and alluding to something that never came. Gives a great perspective into the depth of the culture. (JB)

\$2, PO Box 503 Chenango Bridge, NY 13745-0503, boy_on_boy_love@yahoo.com

Brainscan #19

Alex focuses on three major events in this issue: The Portland Zine Symposium, her participation in Rock 'n Roll Camp for Girls, and although it only gets mentioned in a couple of pages, her wedding. She's derived a lot of inspiration from all three, and it shows in her writing. (JD)

No price given, PO Box 14332, Portland, OR 97293

Brother Dana #5

An opening essay cautions that four years of daily bong hits have made the editor a dull, uninteresting person. It shows in this amalgam of lackluster stories and lame sex jokes told through an unwieldy, blockish cut and paste layout. O doobage, you cruel mistress! Give this editor her passion back! (DAL)

\$2, 20368 Clay St., Cupertino, CA 95014

Catfish Conspiracy Dec/Jan

Collages of cute boys and hammy pictures of friends dot this zine. There are like a dozen pages devoted to heartthrob Beck in an awesome fanatic kind of way. Terrifically endearing, these kids have excellent taste, with nods toward Mission Of Burma and Television. (VC)

\$2, The Catfish Conspirator, 21600 Bloomfield Ave. Apt 23, Hawaiian Gardens, CA 90716, daytripper116@hotmail.com

Chicken-Head Records #4

Funny, distinctive artwork makes the zine memorable. The haphazard content is hit or miss: a funny column about the Night Stalker that will resonate with anyone who grew up in LA in the 1980s, assorted personal anecdotes and reviews, and some pieces that fall flat. But hey, they're from the Valley. I know their condition. (DAL)

\$1, 7438 Etiwanda, Reseda, CA 91335, www.chickenheadrecords.com

☛ Chihuahua And Pitbull #2

I really enjoyed this. Basically, it's just two tales of living in Iowa City and one about New Orleans, but Ethan has that dry, sly wit that could probably make a story about a peanut butter and jelly sandwich



seem interesting. Of course, if he's involved, chances are the "punk-rock behemoth named Ola" would probably be right over his shoulder shouting in his ear that he's doing it all wrong and then shoving him under the kitchen counter. The second story, involving the behemoth and his cohorts' attacks on Ethan, was my favorite of the three. Ethan plays the underdog role to a fault throughout this issue and has you in his corner from the first page. If you like tales of the small town "ordinary," then this is for you. I know I'm definitely looking forward to future issues. (CS)
\$2, Ethan, PO Box 7

☛ **Chunklet #17**

It's been a rough year for Chunklet editor Henry Owings. There was heartbreak, depression and a burglary that wiped out his work and his savings. But hey, things are looking up, because he's about to get a really good *Punk Planet* review. Happy days are here again. Some have a problem with *Chunklet*'s nasty streak, and while it's certainly mean (the cover story is lists of bands they will pay to break up), I don't think it's mean-spirited. It's too self-deprecating, and its targets are usually pretentious and inflated and worthy of ribbing. A genuine love of music and the cross-continental DIY rock culture community underlies it all. And it's hilarious. *Chunklet* is so densely layered with brutally genius wit that it's like a slacker version of one of those bathroom reader anthologies. There's a great riff on the Harper's index, sniglets, and high concept pseudo-interviews, like the "Ask Andrew WK" advice column. Pathbreaking comics like Dave Attell, Patton Oswald, Robert Smigel, and the *Mr. Show* team are featured, along with a comprehensive piece on Mission of Burma, some Neal

Pollack, some Janeane Garofalo, and other goodies too numerous to name. I hereby deem this magazine essential. (DAL)
\$10, PO Box 2814, Athens, GA 30612-0814,
www.chunklet.com

Clutch #9

This mini-comic diary focuses around the protagonist's life-intrusive stomach pains, but the subplot orbits around a mass of others without a cohesive common denominator. Staying true to real life, the story meanders aimlessly without climax nor conclusion, peppered with moments of bed-ridden agony. (VC)
\$1, Clutch McBastard, PO Box 12409, Portland, OR 97212

Comics Interpreter, The #6

This issue is devoted entirely to Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez, the brothers behind the much adored comic *Love & Rockets*. At 48 full-size pages, the interviews and articles seem a bit redundant at times, but overall, this is a worthy tribute to two major forces in underground comics today. (JD)
\$4.95, 5820 N. Murray Ave., Ste. D-12, Charleston, SC 29406, www.tci.homestead.com

Die, The, Vol. 2 Iss.1

If the world were just, every city would house a zine library where kids could go and be all subversive and shit. There by the front door, on a table flooded with show flyers, would sit *The Die*, an interesting and insightful literary newsletter for zinesters and readers alike. (AA)
Free, Red Roach Press, PO Box 764, College Park, MD 20740, <http://redroachpress.tripod.com>

☛ **Disorderly Conduct #6**

The true intent of *Disorderly Content* is difficult to discern. In an anarchist zine, I expect news blurbs about "resistance." I expect long, boring, semitheoretical treatises on the meaning of liberation. I can get sucked into reading an article about the oppression of nature. Certain content in this zine, however, is labeled "for entertainment purposes only," such as a reprint of a 1904 composition that basically says anarchists should be shot like rabid dogs should be shot. But with a page header that says "Gun control sounds good to me, it's important to hit your target," or in a separate feature dedicated to "101 Dead Cops," it's very difficult to treat the controversial content within as "entertainment." In discussing this zine with a friend, he reminded me that the wise punk rockers in *Born Against* could sum up my impression of this zine in song: "I'm really not brain dead/ and I'm not an end table/ and I'm really, really quite sure/ that you do not mean business/ that you're just one of many stupid shouting voices/ who wants to play fight the pigs/ and talk drunk about bombing gas stations/ until you have to go work in one." (JD)
No price listed, PO Box 11331, Eugene, OR 97440

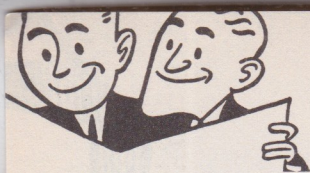
Do The Dog #28

If ska is your thing, this is the comprehensive guide to every subgenre. Contains paragraph updates on what bands are up while being informative and well written. The price seems a bit high, though. (JB)
\$10, Kevin Flowerdew, 26a Craven Rd. Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5NE England

15th Precinct #17

They must be joking—this thing is \$10! But high price aside, there's a Suicide Girls piece, interviews with The Unseen and Lower Class Brats, plus

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the zines (or magazines) we receive, as long as they are released independently. However, despite our best efforts, not every zine ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. Records marked with a little eye (☛) are designated as "highlight" reviews by the reviewer. That means it's a zine that really stands out for them this time around, but just because a review doesn't have an eye doesn't mean it isn't good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like your zine, it's just one person's opinion, so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!



reviews. Also included is a sampler from Punkcore Records. It's pretty good, but \$10 just seems too steep for me, even with the free sampler. (CS)
\$10, PO Box 1390, Capalaba QLD 4147, Australia

Five Minutes Past #6

Stream-of-consciousness rantings for those who think making sense is passé. He chocks up the plentiful spelling errors to his being busy with other projects. That doesn't win me over, but if he really does want to write a book about "six, dnugs and rock and roll," that could be interesting. (DAL)
fiveminutespast@hotmail.com

Fuck You Fanzine #2

As its name so eloquently suggests, this two-page cut-and-pasted zine is full of the piss and vinegar so many punk zines lack. Scene observations are in check, but don't reek of redundancy. Interviews with Ian MacKaye and more round out this (un)pleasant read. (PS)
fumisterfuman@hotmail.com

Go Metric, Winter 2002-2003

One of the great rock zines, this has survived for years by being so straightforward with its love of music and so consistently funny and interesting. The highlight here may well be Rev. Norb's piece about the Spider-Man movie, which, while ringing true for anyone who's a comic geek at heart, is also just a prime sample of Norb being Norb. I love how they end it by making the text smaller and smaller until it disappears, suggesting that his rant will go on forever and ever. They find unique folks to interview, as always, like filmmaker Russ Forster (about his new movie about tribute bands) and Scott McCaughey. Another admirable *Go Metric* trait is the ability to come up with unusually clever lists, and I love their 10 greatest Non-American, Non-British rock bands of all time, a list that ranges from AC/DC to the Go-Betweens. There's an intimate blow-by-blow account of listening to the new record by underrated rock geniuses the Figgs. They love rock 'n' roll, and it's infectious. (DAL)
15-A South Bedford Rd., Pound Ridge, NY 10576

Green Anarchy #11

This is *Disorderly Conduct*'s twin in newsprint form with its "Fuck Science" issue. There are lots of articles on feral foraging, the cons of industrial civilization and earth and animal liberation. It's all very dense, much like *DC*. Overall, my favorite part was the Political Prisoners info section. (CS)
\$3, PO Box 11331, Eugene, OR 97440, greenanarchy@tao.ca

Heckler #60

In celebration of 10 years in print, the skate zine dedicated this issue to 37 mini-interviews, including: Mudhoney, The Vandals, Queens Of The Stone Age, Rocket From The Crypt, John Spencer, Patrick Melcher, Chet Childress, Jessie Van Roechooudt, Natasza Zurek, among many more. (AA)
\$3.99, 1915 21st St., Sacramento, CA 95814, www.heckler.com

Here Civilization Ceased

This road-trip story in the mold of *Cometbus* could use a lesson from the master: The key to capturing moments is showing us characters (including yourself) and giving us telling details, not endless trite descriptions of nature and justifications for stealing. Picks up some at the end, but it's still tough to finish. (DAL)
PO Box 1282, Fullerton, CA 92836

I Don't Like Mondays

I thought I had difficult school experiences growing up until I read this zine. It seems that from the moment her kindergarten teacher tried to stifle her creativity, she was doomed to have the worst educational experience possible. You have to read it to believe everything this poor girl endured. (JD)
\$3, PO Box 2152, Jenkintown, PA 19046

I Hate This Part Of Texas #4

While reading this on an airplane, the elderly woman sitting next to me asked "Is that science fiction? Because it doesn't look believable." I said no, but looking at John's staggered typewriter layout laced with skeleton imagery, I can see how she wanted to believe it was all some made up fantasy world. Fortunately, it's not, and John shares a good amount of information and perspective that I can apply to my own life, and I'm sure that you can too. He talks about new ways of being self-critical and challenging yourself, the Plan B bicycle co-operative (a huge warehouse of parts, tools and heart in New Orleans), the history and environment of New Orleans (including a piece by Sarah Danforth) and a bit about his career of delivering food by bicycle to businessmen. John Gerken has tremendous writing talents and a good grip on creative use of language. I always feel like I learned a good amount when I walk away from his writing. (JB)
\$1+2 stamps, PO Box 72581 New Orleans, LA 70172

Journal Of Modok Studies, The #1

Devoted to Marvel Comics' weirdest little evil guy with a gigantic, smashed head. Various Modok-related articles, an interview with Stephen Notley and lots of drawings of the bigheaded guy. Modok enthusiasts should definitely give this a go. (CS)
\$2, PO Box 948, Athens, GA 30603

Kin Selection, First Edition

Focuses on the sciences of evolution, personal ads, bonobos, decoupling agents (determinant of metabolism) and more. The content is fun because it relates the science back to dating (like a bar-room conversation). (JB)
\$2, 502 S. 49th St. Philly, PA 19143

Matte #3

Definitely the first magazine I've reviewed that has interns. Herein lies foreign cinema, independent music, art and photography, small press philosophy, and some witty and well-drawn comics. Packed with information and humor, though some of the articles are too dense even for this wonkish liberal arts grad. (DAL)
\$6.95, PO Box 15345, Seattle, WA 98115, www.mattemag.com

My Pink Scarf #11

Long descriptions about Corvallis, Ore., and frolicking with nature. I now know what the bark smells like. Kids! Indian Summer has broken up! Carpe diem slogans ("I'm sorry if I ever stepped on anyone's sproutlings") and petty shittalk (one section rips on roommates one by one) obtrusively pepper the zine. (VC)
\$2 to Brandt Schmitz, PO Box 260, Corvallis, OR 97339

My War #2

The editor of this German zine made a conscious effort to write in English to make this a more inclusive read. However, the efforts stop there, or shall I say another agenda presents itself entirely. The sloppy, cut-and-paste layout is filled with pieces that bleed into one another or rotate altogether, making me dizzy. While I applaud their efforts at a unique design, I'd say it comes off more as a confusing afterthought. The columns, articles and interviews themselves are engaging overall, but I just don't think the average reader will bother with the obstacle course that awaits them. (PS)
C/O Mi Amante, PO Box 1112, 39001 Magdenburg Germany, entombed_721@hotmail.com

NeuFutur #9

NeuFutur usually covers everything from dreams to politics, but he's decided to split off his writing on politics and music into a separate zine in the future. The split will do *NeuFutur* good. The zine is often interesting, but can at times be a bit scattered and difficult to follow. (JD)
\$1, UB Box 6064, 408 S. Locust St., Greencastle, IN 46135

Nihil Ex

Maggie sums the past two years of her life in Seattle through stark pictures of various punk shows and other personal photographs. Everything about this zine is just right. It's simple and to the point, and I loved it. (CS)
\$1+3 stamps or trades and free to prisoners, PMB 278, 6523 California Ave. SW, Seattle, WA 98136-1833, nihilx@bust.com

No Shelter

Say you have two friends who are going out with each other. They're madly in love, they have little arguments, and sometimes they just won't shut the fuck up about clichéd politics (e.g. school, work, and healthcare suck). That's *No Shelter* in a nutshell interpolated with sentimental poetry. (AA)
\$2 and two stamps, 309 Cedar St. #550, Santa Cruz, CA 95060, bottomdrawer@hotmail.com

Nosh, Vol., 1, No. 2

Nosh is a "counterculinary" volunteer-run magazine that aspires to grow into a full-fledged periodical. Features columns, articles, interviews, recipes, poetry and fiction. The caliber of the writing is somewhat hit or miss, and some articles are marginally dull, but if you're looking for information on veganism, this might be beneficial. (JD)
\$5.95, PO Box 411373, San Francisco, CA 94141

Picaresque #2

Short stories for short attention spans ranging from the adventures of his friends in high school to dance-floor injuries to traveling in Europe. This would make great bathroom reading for its quick stories. (JB)

\$2, 3 Sharpley Ave. Stawell, Victoria Australia 3380
brendanrocks@hotmail.com

Pit Monthly, The, #1

Just like it says on its logo, this zine sole purpose lies in "Covering Michigan's hard-working music scenes." Features on bands like South Bay Bessie, Atreyu and Eyes Of Dominance. C'mon, this zine covers a lot of Michael Moore's hometown, so it can't be that bad, right? (AA)

Free, PO Box 190102, Burton, MI 48519,
www.thepitmonthly.com

Plastic Farm #1

This fantastic surreal comic reads like a dream induced by a night of western films, cases of Budweiser and bittersweet ex-sex ("hate-fucking," if you want to be mean about it). The storyteller groggily shares his tale with his slacker roommate after vomiting and pissing himself from a night of wine and drunken driving. It's a cowboy story about a lone ranger who rides into town on a dinosaur. The protagonist acknowledges his supernatural powers, but never answers for them, leaving readers amusingly baffled. The story follows the archetypal Western genre: in a bar, with a deputy, and a beautiful fortune teller. What sets this apart is the whimsical dialog between the characters. The witty banter likens cynical hipsters at a bar, attempting cowboy vernacular, but self-referential in their vanity. The pencil-work could use more refinement, as the characters are inconsistent and muddled, despite the nice gray washes for rendering. The story is followed by a suspenseful sci-fi short that evokes the isolating eeriness of the *Alien* movies. It is beautiful in its craft, but lacks the personable draw of its predecessor. (VC)

\$2.95 (and some postage), Rafer Roberts, 1552 Crestview Ave., Hagerstown, MD 21740, www.plasticfarm.com

Red Eye

With a story about a failed train-hopping attempt, Ludovic lives amongst anarchist activist punks. They dumpster, steal or scam to cope with economically depressed student lifestyles. The sniveling whines are unbearable most times, but his sound critiques of activists, art and life are harsh, pointed and funny. (VC)

\$1 or trade, Ludovic B, PO Box 95696, Seattle, WA 98145, ludo@ecomail.org

Secret Life Of Snakes, The #2

Perezine about getting used to domestic life. I like the way he describes his relationship with his young daughter; it's pretty touching. Also includes fiction, book reviews, a strangely vitriolic aversion to Garrison Keillor and a piece about the virtues of DIY publishing in the face of the cold literary industry. (DAL)

\$2, C. Carter, 1403 N. 52nd St., Milwaukee, WI 53208

Slam #8

A slick and glossy alternative music magazine from Vienna. Consider it something like *Alternative Press* but with the fashionably hip The (International) Noise Conspiracy on the cover instead of the fashionably awesome Slipknot. Also: Pearl Jam, Hot Water Music, The Mighty Mighty Bosstones, Dick Dale, and Manowar—in Deutsch! (VC)

Slam-zine, PO Box 100, 1151 Vienna, Austria,
www.slam-zine.com

Speck #10

Focuses on art punk/pet rock bands their influences. My favorite parts, though, were the stories about working in the video store and current war politics. There are also record and zine reviews. (JB)

252, 2780 Cooperative Way, Vancouver, BC V5M 4S3 Canada www.speckfanzine.0catch.com

Sprawl #1

Finally! A zine for me as apparently I fit into the wise elder "who ha[s] been forgotten by a youth-driven culture" zine demographic. Hmm. Actually, *Sprawl* is a good first effort from a group of kids looking for an outlet for short fiction, drawing, rants, manifestos, reviews and collage ideas. (JD)

\$1, 643 Strong Rd., South Windsor, CT 06074

Starving Artist #3

At 16 pages, *Starving Artist* is a short read but thoroughly satisfying nonetheless. It's, like, totally quirky, funny, and fun. There are some amusing cartoons, recounts of a "Book Flunky," fiction and an interview with Notorious Z. (AA)

No price given, nonsequiturgirl@angelfire.com

Tales To Demolish #1

Erik draws '60s inspired "monsters and lone scientist" comics. This is a series about a glaciologist who discovers a monster buried in the ice. The tone is surreal, dark and moody throughout. (JB)

\$3, PO Box 10952 Portland, OR 97296-0952
www.sparkplugcomicbooks.com

Tape Op #32

Tape Op is a great resource for engineers, producers and musicians into the nuts and bolts of recording. It's pretty technical, so laymen be warned. This issue features an interview with Calvin Johnson of K Records and some other recording luminaries, plus a lengthy letters section and an excerpt from Phill Brown's book. (DAL)

PO Box 507, Sacramento, CA 95812,
www.tapeop.com

Twothousandtwo

I read this collection of journal entries all in one sitting, which perhaps wasn't such a good thing considering how much I related to it. There's something about Brian's writing and combination defeatist/hopeful attitude that wouldn't let me put it down. This is the kind of thing that will remind people of that time in their lives that they'd sometimes rather forget. Despite his conflicts with bandmates, friends and girlfriends, and at his job, Brian keeps trudging through life. I also definitely related to his "self-indulgent" attitude about his writing and his need to search constantly for whatever keeps him inspired and alive. Highly recommended. (CS)

No price given, House of Vlad Publishing, 8606 NW 59th Court, Tamarac, FL 33321, blasphemyparade@aol.com

Vacancy #2

A personal zine with an anarchist spin, *Vacancy* strays from the dogmatic tone so common in this genre in favor of sometimes lighthearted and often pleasantly melodramatic street philosophy. Each piece could be further explored, but the rich language shows our author is off to a good start. (PS)

324 Wall Street, Kingston, NY 12401,
plagiariist@doityourself.com

What's Your Damage #2

Recipes, advice for putting on a good garage sale, why they like papayas and Maggie Estep, an interview with the French Kicks, etc. I'm intrigued by their "Doggie Bag Project" in which they want their readers to exchange bags full of dozens and dozens of small random objects. (DAL)

PO Box 161103, Sacramento, CA 95816

What's Your Damage #3

The Gash Girls carry on their quest to write about their favorite pop icons, alterna-hunks and Dixie Chicks records as well as sneer at those icky boy bands. In the process, the ladies Gash write about concerts they've been to, and like, some other totally fun stuff. Whatever. (PS)

The Gash Girls PO Box 161103 Sacramento CA 95816, thegashgirls@yahoo.com

Wiener Society #6

Another issue of the queer/bi/hardcore zine straight outta the big house. Neil's writing is completely visceral and engaging. *Wiener Society* consists of Neil's narrative, interviews and contributions. and has become a staple because of its unabashed negotiations with life as a queer in prison dealing with life on the outside. (AA)

\$3, 109 Arnold Ave., Cranston, RI 02905

Women's Self Defense #2

This time around, Ariel compiled a zine that is both informative (with more self-defense techniques) and supportive to those who have already experienced some sort of assault via personal accounts. Subtitled as the "Stories & Strategies of Survival" issue, many of the personal narratives aren't so much stories of victimhood as they are about empowerment and protecting yourself.

"Loud and Clear: Have you yelled recently?" may seem like a benign article about girly screaming, but it is actually very eye-opening guide as to how to yell effectively and efficiently (yell from your gut, don't scream from your throat). It's articles like that that make this an invaluable resource to those who can't afford to take self-defense classes or just want to brush up on their ass-kicking skills. (AA)

\$3, Ariel Clemenzi, PO Box 2433, Champaign, IL 61825, mspippilotta@yahoo.com

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books

OUR BOOK REVIEWS ARE EDITED BY Joel Schalit

Songbook Nick Hornby McSweeney's

It would be easy to make fun of this book. It would also be unfair. While the idea of taking the rambling, quirky music "review" so integral to zine culture and turning it into a boutique book surely rankles many, both Hornby and McSweeney's have the right. Hornby's novel *High Fidelity* is, after all, a novel about men who take their music way too seriously; men who lives similar to a disgruntled zine reviewer. And McSweeney's is the closest thing our anti-establishment literary establishment has to a true "zine," from its do-it-yourself values to the school children at McSweeney's 826 Valenica who profit from the production process.

Sure, the book looks nice, but it's not too nice. Sure, it's self-indulgent; but it's winningly self-indulgent, just like Hornby's fictional protagonists. The real problem is not that Hornby is getting away with something here, but that too few of us are afforded the opportunity to get away along with him. Wouldn't it be great to live in a world in which autobiographical responses to music took precedence over the need to move product?

That's not to say that *Songbook* has no marketing potential. Although 11 of the songs Hornby mentions are included on a CD with the book, there are a host of others that readers are left to seek in their own. Because he so clearly loves music, without regard for questions of style—or,

for that matter, politics—Hornby is able to sell you on the virtues of artists you might otherwise consign to the recycling bin: Rod Stewart, Steely Dan, Jackson Browne. Something about his prose, though, makes that sale hard to translate to the record store or Internet check-out stand. Because the stories *Songbook* spins take you into everyday life instead of offering an escape from its pressures, the book is more of a provocation for sharing than purchasing.

Want to hear the guitar solo on "Kid Charlemagne" that Hornby describes so beautifully? Make a friend with someone who not only lived through the 1970s, but smoked through it as well. Interested in Eric Clapton before he became a pseudo-professorial icon of cleanliness? Head for the thrift store or used vinyl emporium to find that pop and scratch-ridden copy of the Derek and the Dominoes album that testifies to the passage of time in its very imperfection.

Were more rock criticism written like *Songbook*, we'd spend a lot less time posing or—for those of us with a superiority complex—making fun of *poseurs* and a lot more actually enjoying music. As Hornby makes painfully clear, however, that enjoyment only comes when you put the fear of embarrassment aside. One of the best parts of the book is Hornby's take on the Santana song "Samba Pa Ti", in which he confesses that it was "what I was going to hear when I lost my virginity." Two pages later, after considering the relative merits of a series of "sexy" songs, he comes to the

climax:

Inevitably, I did not lose my virginity to "Samba Pa Ti." Instead, my unfortunate girlfriend and I were listening to Rod Stewart's *Smiler*, my favorite record at the time; Side Two, I notice now, features "Hard Road," "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" and "Dixie Toot." In a perfect world, obviously, that wouldn't have happened.

But it's precisely because we don't live in a perfect world that we need books like this. *Songbook* shows you how to take charge of your pleasure, not by picking the right music, but by writing it into being. —

Charlie Bertsch

The No-Nonsense Guide to Terrorism Jonathan Barker Verso

If "War=Terror", then are anti-colonial wars unjust? If the US is the "world's biggest terrorist", what about the smaller ones? And if Cheney, Rumsfeld, et. al., are "The Real Terrorists", as popular series of Bay Area stickers suggest, then who are the "fake" ones, and what response should their actions receive? Inverting rhetoric of the war on terrorism may create effective slogans for antiwar mobilization, but it fails to create effective strategies to build a just, peaceful world. For Jonathan Barker, a writer on street-level politics in Africa and India, the movement against corporate globalization cannot ignore these ques-

tions. Declaring in his opening sentence, "Terrorism came and found me, forced me to write about it" after September 11th, Barker undertakes the question, "How do terrorism and the war on terrorism affect politics, popular politics in particular?" with the belief that understanding terrorism "may carry us more deeply than we realize into questions about how our world works and fails to work."

The result is a Chomskyan survey of history, that also takes "the terrorism experts"—and the need to respond to security concerns—at face value. The most impressive feature of Barker's book is its international scope. Within the opening pages, Barker cites as "terrorist incidents" the Reign of Terror in Jacobin France, a suicide bombing in Israel, a kidnapping in Argentina's Dirty War, and assassinations of a state official in Greece and of human rights workers in El Salvador, while noting the pride Russian anarchists took in proclaiming themselves "terrorists" in the late 1800s. A sidebar—tracing "Six Months of Terrorism" from July to December 1996—expands to every other continent, featuring "white extremists of the Afrikaaner Resistance Movement" in South Africa with "IRA terrorists" in Northern Ireland, "Tamil Tiger guerillas" in Sri Lanka with "Islamic radical terrorists" in Saudi Arabia, the Atlanta

Olympics bomber with "Tibetan activists" in China. The effect is to immediately (and brilliantly) undermine arguments that undergird the Bush Administration's "war on terrorism": as a clash of civilizations, a crusade against Islamic terror, a struggle to defend "our" American values of democracy (and to export them).

Barker identifies two kinds of terrorism—group terrorism and state terrorism. This enables him to discuss terrorism as omnipresent, as a tool in the arsenal of guerrillas and governments, in which "nowhere is the political loading more evident than in the refusal . . . to recognize their own terrorist actions." Barker writes, "The organizational chart of most existing governments hides some agency with a terrorism brief, and the state's history conceals some episode in which state terrorism became a prominent feature of politics."

That leads him to redefine historical episodes as terrorist, though the consequences of this—and in a few cases, even the specific events he's referring to—aren't always clear. For instance, when Barker notes, "The story of the founding of the US includes both the Indian Wars of the colonial period and the War on Independence. In either conflict terrorism was an adjunct to warfare", it's unclear what aspect of the colonists' military campaign against the British is terror-

ist. Barker continues, "Israel finds its beginnings in the suffering of the massive terrorism of the Holocaust and in a few militant terrorist actions." (The latter likely refers to actions of the "Haganah, Irgun and the Stern Gang with their differing agendas for the creation of Israel," who Barker earlier cites among "the full spectrum of terrorist organizations.")

But throughout the book, it's unclear what the consequences of redefining genocide as state terrorism are—particularly since there is an internationally established definition of genocide and a body of law against it. Barker's revisionism also suggests that terrorism has been an essential part of state formation—though elsewhere, in citing Fanon's theory on violence as essential to national liberation, Barker demurs, conceding that "Fanon had a point" but "clearly underestimates the destructive effect of terrorism."

If creating a comparable infrastructure to adjudicate claims of terrorism—and "removing terrorism from warfare [as well as] from politics"—is possible as Barker hopes, you'll get no sense of efforts to do so in this book, and that is its weakness. After establishing the omnipresence of terrorism, Barker acknowledges the difficulty of defining it, and examines the vested interests states have in preventing a clear definition from cohering. The defi-

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inition Barker settles upon—"terrorism is the intentional use of, or threat to use violence against civilians or against civilian targets, in order to attain political aims"—is useful, as is the note, "According to our definition only actions are unambiguously terrorist or non-terrorist. People and organizations and strategies make more or less use of terrorism often in conjunction with other kinds of political action."

But as the preceding quote on the internationalism of terrorism shows—with its citations of "extremists", "terrorists", "guerrillas", and "activists" all under the rubric of terrorism—this definition requires a precision in language, historical explication, and a consistency that Barker can't maintain over the entire book. It's unclear what makes the IRA "terrorists" and the Tamil Tigers "guerrillas" in the above quote, or why Barker switches from "groups [that] have given rise to episodes of terrorist action" to "terrorist organizations." Ultimately, Barker's analytical categories begin to break down, as when he notes, "groups probably still get most of their funding from governments." But none of these caveats are to fault Barker's book, which is an intellectually principled effort to sort through competing claims, while avoiding the polarization of language and recycling of ideologies that the war on terrorism seems to encourage. This *No-Nonsense Guide to Terrorism* is a vital book to think through, particularly for Americans seeking to turn their national policy away from war. —Aaron Shuman

Percussion: Drumming, Beating, Striking

John Mowitt
Duke University Press

When scholars tackle popular music, the result is frequently embarrassing. Lacking "insider" knowledge of their subject, they not only discredit themselves, but anyone who uses long words to

describe short pleasures. John Mowitt is aware of the danger. Even though *Percussion: Drumming, Beating, Striking* descends into the labyrinth of "theory", it never loses sight of the paradox in discussing popular music with the language of the graduate school seminar.

Mowitt's preface does a great job of explaining his approach, showing that he won't use difficult sentences to hide his ignorance but instead to reveal insights that disappear in the high-contrast language of the mainstream media:

A few words at the outset about what follows. I used to play drums. I don't anymore—or, at least, I don't play professionally. When I used to play, I also wrote songs. I am grateful that the well-known, and now rather tired, drummer joke — What's the last thing a drummer ever says to his or her bandmates? How about working on one of my songs!—was never inflicted on me (at least, not to my face). When we performed, our sets were always a mix of covers and originals. Originals had to be used judiciously because of the problem of "audience." Would they work? In many respects, this book confronts the same dilemma. Will it work?

This passage lends itself to more than one interpretation. Clearly, as his periodic use of musical notation in the book also indicates, Mowitt wants his readers to think of him as both a writer and a drummer. More pressingly, his distinction between "originals" and "covers" suggests that he sympathizes with those readers who are unfamiliar with the philosophical concepts he uses and the names he drops.

Writing about what happens when a white artist covers the work of a black one, Mowitt reflects on Buddy Holly and the Crickets' 1957 performances at the Apollo Theater in Harlem. After being booed for

several shows, Holly decided to open the next one with "Bo Diddley," which the Crickets hadn't even rehearsed:

It worked. It was as though the Crickets had, at last, given the audience its "propers," not simply by playing a black and therefore recognizable hit (Bo Diddley had, of course, played the Apollo), but by acknowledging, through the discreet homage of the cover, the sounds folded into their own.

Mowitt uses rock and roll throughout *Percussion* to similar effect. He allows us to see that, no matter how abstract his thinking gets, it owes a huge debt to the backbeat.


This is dramatically evident in his second chapter, "Knocking the Subject," when, after a long and complex discussion of the idea of "interpellation" in the work of leftist philosophers like Louis Althusser, Slavoj Žižek, and Theodor Adorno, he slips in a "cover" to help out his readers. The contrast is startling:

What strikes one then when he responds to a musical call for precisely the kind of attention channeled through the percussive field? Sticking with my earlier invocation of the British Invasion, consider a track from the Rolling Stones' album *December's Children*: "Get Off of My Cloud."

Mowitt's book is full of dramatic leaps like this.

It wouldn't matter, though, if the dense philosophizing that comes before, between, and behind the music were. To the skeptic who regards all scholarly thinking as mere "hot air", *Percussion: Drumming, Beating, Striking* serves as a reminder that air isn't really empty. If it comes in contact with the right surface, it can make beautiful music.

—Charlie Bertsch ©



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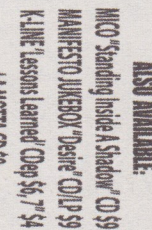
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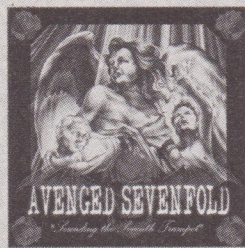
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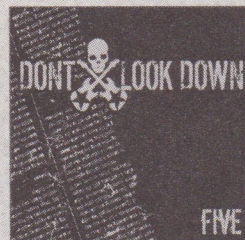
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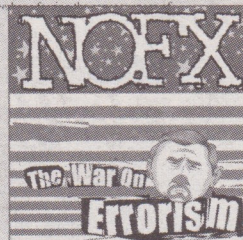
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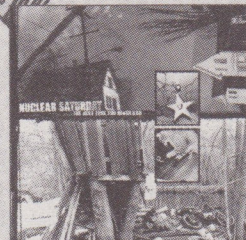
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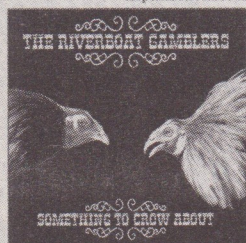
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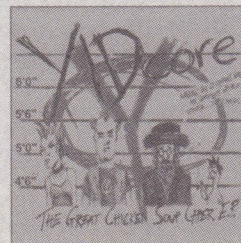
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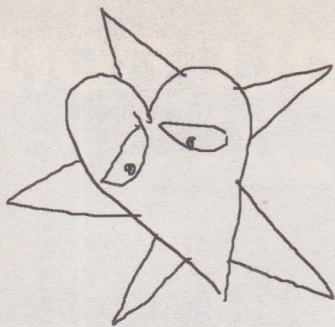


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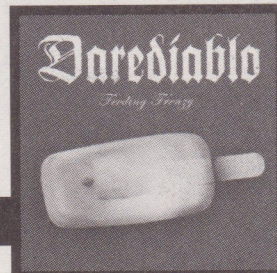


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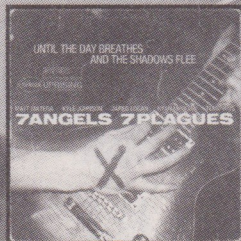
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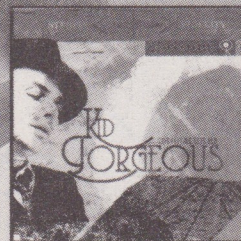
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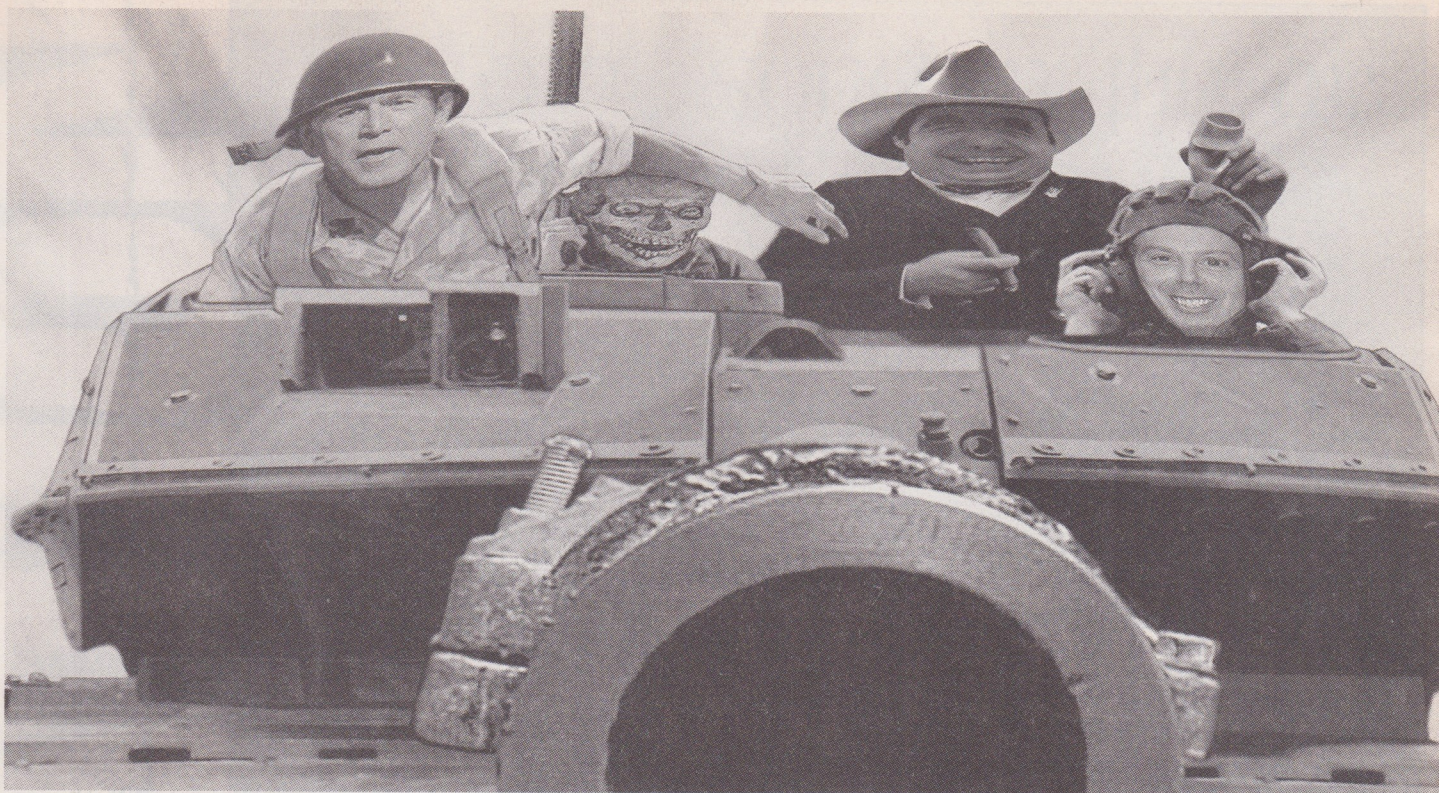
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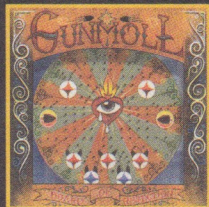
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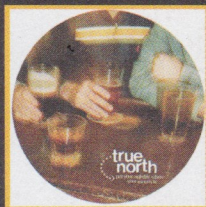
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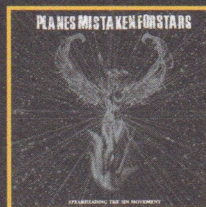
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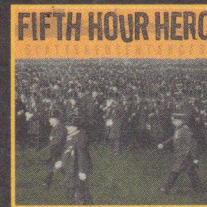
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Where Your
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**PLANES MISTAKEN
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AGAINST ME!
"The Disco Before
the Breakdown"
7"/CDep



FIFTH HOUR HERO
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LP/CD



**THE BLACKTOP
CADENCE**
"Chemistry for
Changing Times"
LP/CD

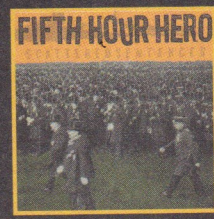


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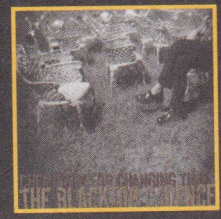
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"I'm probably the last person you'd ever expect to be in the military, but I am. Lucky me."

